



DRAGON MAKEN WAR

BOOK 02

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Dragon Maken War

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Synopsis

220 years ago, in the legendary Dragon Demon War, Hero Azell ended the war by killing the evil Dragon Demon race's King Atein. He was able to save the population, but as a consequence, he was cursed. While he was dying, the high magician suggested a gamble that might save his life.

‘The Dragon’s hibernation is the only key to saving your life.’

Instead of a human’s sleep, he slept the sleep of the dragons and he was able to overcome the curse. Now he is realizing that he has slept way longer than a human’s life span.

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Chapter 101 – The Sword That Split The Heavens (4)

Pah-ah-ah-ah!

“Kook!”

Jeffers was taken aback. Azell hadn't moved, yet a beam of light came down at angle from the sky towards him.

If Laura hadn't acted, he would have suffered a direct hit. When Jeffers realized this fact, he shuddered.

Azell appeared in front of him like a phantom.

“Bastard!”

Jeffers lashed out with his sword in surprise. He was the descendent of Almarick, who was called ‘The Sword that parts a storm’. Instead of being a magician, he was a swordsman, who practised the Dragon Arts. The sword strike infused with powerful Dragon Demon Magic cut through Azell.

‘Clone!’

However, it was a fake.

Pah-ah-ah-ah!

In a flash, Azell was split into three. He attacked Laura, Kieren and Jeffers at the same time. None of the three Dragon Demon were able to locate Azell's real body, so they lashed out against the opponent in front of them with their full strength. Amongst the three, the real Azell was the one to attack Kieren.

...or they were under that false assumption.

Pah-haht!

“Koo-ahk!”

The terrifying sound of flesh being cut rang out as blood

fountained into the air. Before the first scream could die down, the sound of steel being used was heard continuously followed by the the sound of destruction. Then the screams rang out one after another.

“He wasn’t aiming for us?”

Kieren was a beat late in assessing the situation. The one to attack Kieren had also been a clone. The magic was very intricate, and there been enough resistance in cutting the clone’s flesh that he had mistaken it for the real body. However while the three Dragon Demons were focused on the clones, Azell had attacked their subordinates in the rear.

Kieren no longer hesitated.

“Dragon Demon Weapon: Bleeding Star!”

A red light was emitted from him as Kieren revealed the Dragon Demon weapon passed down to him by Baldazark, who used to be one of the four great Dragon Demon generals. At a glance, it looked like a crystal ball, which was as big as a child’s head. However, at the center of the weapon, one could see several thousand layer of threads made out of light. It was dizzying to see such a tangle of threads as they wriggled around. From the surface, it was letting out a blood colored light, and the threads of light started to rapid flow into the surrounding.

“Duke Almarick!”

“Understood. I order using the authority granted to me by my great name! Return form the Eternal Battlefield! Dragon Demon Weapon: Storm Blade!”

Accompanying a blast of wind, a large sword appeared. It looked to be made from a transparent material like glass, and it started to burn with blue flame when Jeffers took hold of it.

Azell didn’t care if they brought out their Drag Demon weapons or not. He was creating havoc within the ranks of the Dragon

Demon king worshippers. All the combatants gathered there had considerable amount of martial powers, but they were like scarecrows in front of Azell.

The three Dragon Demons carrying Dragon Demon weapons went forth to stop Azell. However, they were also swept up into the chaos.

“Which one...is the real one?”

Laura mumbled as if she was groaning.

Azell was multiplying as time passed. Every time he used the Instantaneous Movement to evade, a new clone appeared. Moreover, all the clones possessed a presence that made it was impossible to tell which one was the real body. These clones were even able to use physical attacks to take down the enemies.

What if they use the Dragon Demon weapon to discern the real body of Azell?

This was another foolish idea. The Dragon Demon weapon called the ‘The Sword that Split the Heavens’ was freely being passed amongst Azell’s real body and clones. Azell was using this special property to the fullest extent as he continuously moved the location of the Dragon Demon weapon as he continued his slaughter....

“...I guess enough of you have gathered in one place.”

At some point, the Dragon Demon king worshippers heard Azell’s low voice, and they felt terror wash over them. In a flash, Azell’s clones collapsed on itself, and Azell appeared outside of the perimeter of the Dragon Demon king worshippers. He emitted a frightening lightning strike.

Kieren was dismayed.

“We’ve been had! Everyone scatter!”

Azell had made several dozen clones, yet they hadn’t been created

to take down all the Dragon Demon King worshippers. Even Azell couldn't create and maintain such a high number of clones. There was a limit on how much offensive capability he could allocate to each clone.

Moreover, the elite troops of the Dragon Demon king worshippers were doing quite well in weathering Azell's surprise attack. The only ones to be taken down were the ones that came across the Dragon Maken. In the end, only 10 were taken out of battle, and the rest were injured.

Azell had wanted to cause chaos. He used the chaos to control the movements of his enemies.

Azell's plan was carried out perfectly. Kieren realized that his allies had been maintaining a perimeter for defense, but they were now concentrated in a single location.

"It is too late."

Azell put on a smile of satisfaction as he brought down his sword.

-Horn of the Thunder Dragon!

The intense thunder, which was reminiscent of a Dragon's Roar, swallowed up the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

Ggwah-gwah-gwah-gwahng!

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While her sight was burning white from the intense thunder strike, Laura was swept up by a strong sense of déjà vu.

Her mission had been a failure when Azell had interfered. After the failed mission, she had returned to her family house to meet someone. This being was the oldest elder within the Plain of Darkness. During the Dragon Demon war, this being caused fear and chaos within the ranks of humans just by appearing in front of them.

She had talked to this being about Azell.

‘Maybe this is the start of fate repeating itself again.’

At the time, Laura hadn’t fully understood what this being was talking about. Even amongst the standard of Dragon Demons, this being had lived a very long life, and the way he saw and thought about the world was very alien.

He smile as he looked at the conflicted Laura.

‘Unfortunately, you are a child, who had everything taken away to mold you into Aunsaurus’ heir. When the day we’ve been waiting for come, I might be able to wake up from my sleep. At that time, you’ll have all your answer. At this time, I cannot tell you everything. Instead, I’ll show you a memory that you will need.’

Then he showed her the far distant past by showing her his memory of the Dragon Demon war.

This knowledge wasn’t passed down to her by words. It hadn’t been shown through the records.

He pushed the memory from his mind into Laura. She experienced it as a daydream. This allowed Laura to experience the past as if she was actually there.

She had the memory of an experience she had never experienced before, but it made her feel a sense of deja vu right now.

The man with the swirling red hair, the sword, and the overwhelming thunder strike....

It was identical to what she saw within the memory of the Dragon Demon war.

“Azell Karzark... The man who will have the chance reverse the fate of the king.”

Her mumbled words were drowned out by the explosion created by the thunder strike. Even she couldn’t hear her own words.

Koo-goo-goo-goo-goo.....!

The white explosion created by the thunder faded away.

“Kook... Shit.”

Kieren’s fists were shaking. He had been barely able to block the attack. If he hadn’t called out his Dragon Demon weapon, and if Laura hadn’t used her Vitan’s Chalice, which had an insanely high defensive capability, their party would have been decimated from a single strike.

However, he was only able to protect only his immediate vicinity. At that moment, Kieren hadn’t realized it yet, but half of his troop of 100 was killed. Their corpses weren’t even left behind. Moreover, even amongst the survivors, only half of them were able fight.

Kieren mumbled to himself as if he couldn’t believe what had just happened

“...could it be? Is he Azell Karzark reborn?”

From an early age, he had heard countless stories about the Dragon Demon war. He was actually fed up with it. He was told about how great his grandfather Baldazark was. Moreover, he was told stories about Azell Karzark, who had killed Baldazark. He was told how frightening and terrible Azell was....

The Azell of right now reminded him of the Azell within the story. Each of the elements that had contributed to make Azell into such a powerful martial might could be seen now. It was as if the Azell of the past was reborn.

Kwahng!

At that moment, an explosion rang out from the side. Kieren looked towards the direction in surprise, and he saw Azell clashing with Jeffers.

“Hmmm. It seems your mental fortitude isn’t too bad.”

Azell hadn’t let up after unleashing a calamity level attack on his

enemies. He had killed several survivors, who were standing there dumbfounded. Then he ambushed Jeffers. However, Jeffers blocked the attack as if he had expected an ambush.

“How dare you ambush me this way! Did you really think it’ll work on me?”

“Still, you say those bold words but your expression says otherwise.”

Azell taunted Jeffers. In truth, Jeffers was trying to hide his fear by using his bluster. Unlike his imposing voice, his expression was rigid as cold sweat ran down his body.

“Anyways.....”

Azell suddenly tilted his head in puzzlement as he asked a question.

“I’m really curious about this, so please don’t misunderstand my intentions. Just here me out. I just want to confirm it again. Are you sure you are Almarick’s descendent?”

“Why are you spouting that nonsense again? Are you trying to insult me?”

“No matter how I see it, it doesn’t seem like you are lying about it... At the very least, you believe it is true. How strange. I’m having a hard time discerning the secret design behind this move.”

“What did you just say?”

Kieren went over his thoughts as he looked at Azell.

‘Is it a clone or the real body?’

The Azell, who was clashing violently with Jeffers, didn’t hold the blue Dragon Maken anymore. He held the Dragon Sword. Its white blade was made from dragon bone.

However, he had been tricked time and time again, so it stopped him from coming up with a swift judgement. At that moment, Kieren thought he was being cautious with his actions, but even

this hesitation was induced by Azell.

Before he could come up with a plan of action, Azell moved first. More clones with substance appeared as they attacked the Dragon Demon king worshippers. On top of it all, Kieren's worst case scenario came to pass.

‘What the hell! He can clone the Dragon Demon weapon!!’

All of Azell's clones were holding the Dragon Maken. Each Dragon Maken was letting out a resonance of Dragon Demon magic, so one couldn't tell, which one was the real one.

Moreover, one of the clone was aiming for the fallen Niberis, who was being attended by one of her subordinate.

“Niberis!”

Kieren moved without any thoughts on his own self-preservation. He let his own Dragon Demon weapon block the attack heading towards him, and he stood in front of Niberis.

Pah-ahk!

Kieren felt a pain intense pain. He had received a deep wound. The pain was so intense that Kieren wasn't able to let out a scream. He used his Dragon Demon magic indiscriminately.

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

He didn't even have the time to properly shape his magic. He just formed powerful image in his mind, and he let out Dragon Demon magic like a whirlwind. This choice of action might lead to his death, but he didn't have the luxury to be picky.

Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah.....!

At the same time, he recalled his Dragon Demon weapon, which was blocking Azell's attack from where Kieren's original location.

If he had his Dragon Demon weapon, he would be able to block consecutive attacks from Azell!

However, the expected follow up attack never arrived. After a brief moment, Kieren was able to recover his senses, and he used magic to stop the bleeding. He assessed his surrounding.

Cheng! Che-cheng! Kah-ah-ah-ahng!

Azell was in a fight against Jeffers. Jeffer's Dragon Demon weapon and Azell's Dragon Sword was being swung in a splendid style. Sparks and shockwave exploded forth when their swords impacted on each other.

At a glance, it looked like an even fight, but if one was more careful in one's observation, one could tell this wasn't so. Moreover, it was weird that these two beings were fighting in such a manner.

‘Duke Almarick. Why are you using your Dragon Arts?’

Chapter 102 – The Sword That Split The Heavens (5)

Jeffers was a powerful Dragon Arts practitioner, and he was holding a Dragon Demon weapon in his hand. Therefore, he shouldn't be fighting a normal sword fight with Azell. Every swing should be flattening the surrounding as if a typhoon had descended upon the land.

However, he wasn't able to do so. Since Kieren was a magician, he couldn't see through the problem, but he could tell something was wrong by looking at Jeffers' expression.

Azell was perfectly controlling Jeffers' movements.

Jeffers was somehow able to match each sword strike, but he was being overwhelmed in all other aspect. He tried to raise his Dragon Demon Qi, and it was as if Azell had been waiting for it. Jeffers' Energy Pulse was cut off. If he tried to use the power of the Dragon Demon weapon, it was interfered with. Jeffers was adept at using the flow of power. Most of his moves required amplification. It was needed to create burst damage, yet it was being sealed. This situation was a nightmare for Jeffers.

'Hmm. Who the hell is this bastard?'

Jeffers was a mystery he couldn't solve, so Azell furrowed his brows.

Azell was trying to confirm something in this sword battle. Instead of focusing on killing his enemy, Azell was obsessing over the question he had. It was very foolish thing to do, yet Azell couldn't help himself. He decided he had to figure out if there was some secret design being carried out by the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

However... Azell wouldn't be able to find the answer by fighting him. Jeffers Almarick's existence was a puzzle that couldn't be

solved by Azell.

Kairen sent a Whispering towards Azell.

-How long are you going to play with him? It isn't the time to play around right now.

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Kairen was protecting Yuren as he fought against the Dragon Demon king worshippers. Azell had blown away most of the enemy's forces, so it wasn't difficult for Kairen to face the remaining troops. However, Laura gave intermittent assistance to the troops, so Kairen was at a disadvantage.

Azell sighed at those words.

"Yes. In the end, I can't solve this problem right now."

"What are you talking about about?"

While Jeffers furrowed his brows, Azell took a big leap backwards.

The summon of the Dragon Maken had reached its limit. At the very least, he wouldn't be able to summon it again in this battle. It would be impossible for him to kill all of them with overwhelming force. He had to incrementally cause confusion, and this would cause his opponents to reveal their weak points....

At that moment, a being ran past Azell to attack Jeffers. It was Leticia.

"I'll take this guy. This bastard... No, I have a debt to settle with this bastard's bloodline."

"Mmm?"

"Anyways, it seems you have your own opponent you will have to deal with."

As if she didn't have any more words for him, Leticia turned her head away. While Azell was taken aback by her actions, someone

rushed towards Azell as he brought down a black sword.

Zzhuhng!

The white Dragon Sword and the Black Sword, which was a nexus of Darkness Magic, clashed against each other. A clear sound rang out. Azell looked at the Black Swordsman Duran, who was letting out a fearsome killing intent.

“Ah. I guess I have to settle my debt against you.”

In the previous battle with Niberis, Azell had suffered under the hands of Duran. It was an unforgettable memory. Azell’s fighting spirit burned as he assessed Duran’s battle capability. After the first clash, the two of them exchanged five moves in a flash. When they disengaged from each other, Zell had a decent idea about the other man’s power level.

‘He’s a Septuple Master. He is the strongest Spirit Order practitioner I’ve met in this era.’

According to Kairen, the Rulain Kingdom also possessed a high rank Spirit Order practitioner. Viscount Haven was the kingdom’s greatest swordsman, and his skills were even acknowledged by Kairen.

However, Azell hadn’t had the opportunity to meet him. While he was staying at the Dukedom of Tarantos, the most accomplished Spirit Order practitioner he met was a Sextuple master. Moreover, every time one added a ring the difficulty of progressing to the next ring increased. Duran was at a level where Azell considered him to be the top Spirit Order practitioner he had personally met in this era.

On the other hand, Duran was shaken to the core when he looked at Azell.

‘What did this runt do? Even if he did go through the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, how could he have gone through such a rapid growth?’

Duran had never gone through the Dragon's Slayer Ritual before. However, as an officer living inside the Plain of Darkness, he was allowed access to the knowledge about the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. Even if one did had experienced a successful Dragon Slayer's Ritual, Azell's growth rate couldn't be explained.

‘He can now rival my power... No, could it be higher than mine?’

Duran wasn't able to get a measure of Azell's fighting power. Since he assumed Azell wasn't able to see assess him either, Duran didn't consider this occurrence to be strange. It was something that happened quite often amongst Spirit Order practitioners of similar level.

Duran shook off his confusion, and he yelled out in anger.

“How dare a sinner harm the Miss' precious body! I'll send you to hell!”

“You have such a great slave mentality that I'm in awe.”

“You are a fool that doesn't know the truth. I won't forgive your transgression!”

“...actually, I have a question I want to ask you.”

Azell asked his question as he blocked Duran's violent attacks. Azell wasn't being pressed into a corner. Azell didn't show any urgency, and his attitude made Duran's eyebrows twitch.

“Were you perhaps a talent grown from within the ranks of the Dragon Demon king worshippers?”

Azell still couldn't understand why humans of this era chose to become Dragon Demon king worshippers. However, if the person grew up from within the organization of the Dragon Demon king worshippers, he could somewhat understand how it could happen.

Duran snorted at Azell's conjecture.

“I was saved by a benefactor, and he blessed me with the knowledge, which allowed me to find the correct path.”

“Hmm. So you weren’t originally a Dragon Demon king worshipper? You chose to become one? Why? The Dragon Demon war ended a long time ago, and it is the era where humans reign. So why do you worship a phantom from the past?”

“His teaching is the real truth. Our god may be considered to be history after his death, but our worship for him hasn’t ended yet. We have to fight in the darkness until our savior returns. This is the tribulation the believers have to bear.”

“How is his teaching the correct one? Do you really relish the idea where the Dragon Demons rule over the humans?”

“Don’t make me laugh. The evil that has to be fixed in the world is the human’s domination of this world.”

“...what?”

“One’s ability doesn’t matter to humans. Good and evil doesn’t matter either. The only thing that matter is bloodlines. Just because one is born from better parents... These irredeemable trashes look down and steps on the other humans based on their bloodlines. How is that just? We aren’t talking about beings born from another race. Humans use other humans to build up their destiny. They do this by controlling, dominating and exploiting those of the same race. How can you say this world order is just!”

“.....”

While Azell listened to Duran’s words, he knew that he would never be able to bridge the emotional distance he felt with Duran. Duran’s voice was filled with hate and sadness that won’t be erased in his lifetime.

Azell didn’t know what kind of life Duran had led. However, Spirit Order practitioners dealt with the mind. Even amongst high level Spirit Order practitioners, one could get a glimpse of the underlying truth of the other using one’s will.

‘Is it because he is a religious fanatic?’

Azell had seen countless variation of shortcomings expressed by humans. He saw humans betray each other in order to live. In front of reality that was unbearable, he saw the minds of humans break as they searched for refuge.

‘No, he is different. This man...’

Azell had seen people like Duran before.

During the Dragon Demon war, the environment made it easy for humans to hate on other humans. It wouldn't be too hard to become inflamed by the action of humans. It was easy to see why one could hate, scorn and give up on the humans. In extreme situations, humans had the capacity to become feeble-minded and unsightly.

Azell also had despised many humans, and he had given up on them. However, he was also able to find humans he was able to love. How miraculous was that?

A human, who didn't love the world made by humans, was standing in front of him. It wasn't strange to see such an occurrence.

During the Dragon Demon War, Azell had despised the system he was affiliated with. He had raged as he looked at the stupid and self-centered humans above him. In such an unreasonable situation, he had struggled for a solution to do away with the difficulty he faced.

However, what if the difficulty and unreasonableness had been so huge that Azell hadn't been able to overcome it?

What if Azell didn't have the power, talent or luck to cause change? He would basically be trampled by his own fate...

What would he have been like in such a situation?

‘...I see.’

Azell finally received an answer to his question.

During the Dragon Demon war, there were Dragon Demons, who had loved humans. They hadn't agreed with the will of the Dragon Demon King. They betrayed their own race to stand with the humans.

Then there were the opposite case. There were humans, who were filled with so much hate, that they agreed with the will of the Dragon Demon king. These humans joined the Dragon Demon army.

The Dragon Demon King was dead, and it had been 200 years since the end of the Dragon Demon war. However, the social composition hadn't changed. It was still too easy for the humans to hate other humans. When one faced an unreasonable amount of adversity in this world, it wasn't strange to see some people consider the worship of the Dragon Demon King as a solution.

"Didn't you say your name was Duran? It has been a long time I've seen someone like you."

"A long time... This is the first time I've seen someone like you, you sinner of a runt!"

"I didn't mean it that way. It's just... It is a bit sad. Although, the whole situation is ridiculous."

"What are you talking about? "

"If you want to understand, we'll need to have a long conversation. However, I'm sure that will never happen. I wanted to create a world where people no longer despaired. I fought hard for for the change, and the calamity in front of humanity was averted... However, human nature remained the same."

Azell put on a bitter smile, and he became unyielding. Azell had barely moved, while blocking all of Duran's attack. However, his iron defense was slowly transitioning into offense.

At a certain point, the white blade and the black blade was entwined with each other....

Pah-gahk!

Duran's shoulder guard was sent flying.

‘Who is this runt?’

Duran was taken aback. He hadn't been able to see Azell's previous sword strike. By looking at the trajectory of the strike, their swords should have clashed against each other. However, Duran's sword strike hit empty air. In the next moment, it was as if time had skipped. The intermediate step was omitted, and Azell's sword was seeking out his neck.

If he only relied on his reflex, his head would have been severed. However, he used a secret technique, which had been passed down to him from the Plain of Darkness. If his consciousness was messed with by an enemy, a defensive mechanism drilled into his body would activate to save his his life.

Basically, while Azell was participating in a high speed battle, he had attacked Duran's mind. Duran's consciousness was altered. Duran had thought he had a perfect defense against such an attack, yet Azell's technique was too intricate.

Che-che-che-cheng!

Sparks flew as the tide of the battle changed.

When Azell had been on defense, his speed had been slower than Duran. However, his incredible Insight had allowed Azell to cut off the secret techniques of the Spirit Order being attempted to be used by Duran. Moreover, Azell was able to predict the destination of each sword strike, so he used the minimal amount of movement to deflect the sword strikes.

However, Azell's movements were incrementally getting faster. In all facets of the battle, Azell was overtaking Duran, and he was slowly taking away Duran's options.

‘No, I was mistaken! This is.....!’

Duran soon realized he was under a misperception. Azell wasn't moving faster. Duran was moving slower.

Chapter 103 – The Sword That Split The Heavens (6)

He hadn't realized he had suffered a mental attack up until a moment ago. He hardened his mental barrier in response, and he put a very skillful lock over this barrier. When he felt the movement of his body slacken a little bit, he continuously changed his mental defensive pattern to protect his mind.

However... Azell started to slowly deceive his sense again.

In all he did, Duran's reaction was incrementally getting slower. His eyes took in the sight. The information was processed, and he tried to decide on how to respond... Still, he still found that he was slightly slower than he ought to be, and Duran was at a disadvantage.

'Where is he attacking me from?'

He was sure his mind was being attacked from some angle. He had thought he had blocked every avenue that could be used to attack his mind, so how was Azell doing this?

Azell spoke as Duran was gripped in his confusion.

"As expected, there are techniques that I don't know about. You used a technique that uses reflexive response, which doesn't require the control of the conscious mind. This technique didn't exist in the Dragon Demon war. Since it isn't a forgotten secret technique, I'm guessing it was developed afterwards?"

Giles and Boar had also used similar techniques. The movement was independent from the order given by one's mind. The reflexive responses were engraved into the body, and it could be used to reach the state of Detachment. One would be able to reach peak efficiency in one's movements.... Azell didn't know any technique that dealt with such concepts.

"You are superb. You remind me of a Spirit Order practitioner I

met a long time ago. However, you haven't completely mastered the meaning behind the concept of 'seeing'."

"What?"

Pah-ahk!

It was unbelievable, but Duran's side was split open as blood fountained forth.

In a flash, Duran realized his sight had been narrowed to the extreme. It wasn't just his sight. All of his senses were hyper-focused on Azell, who was in front of him. This had created a blind spot in his senses. Normally, he wouldn't allow such a thing to happen.

When his vision suddenly dimmed to a pin prick, he came to an understanding. It hadn't just been his sight. All his senses had been focused on the Azell in front of him. This act had created a blindspot in his senses that would have never existed in normal times. When his weak point was revealed, Azell's clone had appeared next to Duran, and it had stabbed him.

Azell retracted his clone. He spoke as he walked past the falling Duran.

"You only focused on the opponent in front of you. This is the reason behind your death."

"...seeing. I see. Vision... No, you manipulated me into paying attention only to you..."

Duran was on his knees. His mumbled words sounded like a groan. He was also a high rank Spirit Order practitioner. Azell had given him a small hint, yet he was able to figure out why he had lost.

When a person only focuses on a target in front of oneself, one's field of vision became narrowed. Even a person, who normally looks at his surrounding, would become preoccupied by a sword coming towards one's body from the front. If one frantically

blocked the incoming sword strikes, one would have no idea what was going on in the back or the side of oneself.

Azell had used this characteristic to his advantage. He used the fact that they were looking into each other's eyes, and he mixed in illusions to cause minor errors in how Duran perceived his movements.

He used this tactic to fluster Duran, and at the same time, he ate away at Duran's sense using his mental wave. He made it so that Duran became solely focused in blocking his attack. When he confirmed there was a big blind spot formed in Duran's senses, Azell used his clone to deliver a critical blow.

'This man is a monster. I can't do anything...'

Duran shuddered when he realized the gulf between Azell and himself. However, he couldn't just fall like this. Even if it was a hopeless situation, he had to get up.

"No way. I cannot fall here... Miss... My mistress..."

His wound was too deep. The sword had cut through his bones, and it had even punctured his heart. He had no answer for this.

Moreover, there had been a curse like power within Azell's sword. It made a mess of the flow of his magical energy within his body. He couldn't even use Spirit Order to stem his bleeding.

"Saibein-nim. I was incapable of... Your daughter... I wasn't able to protect here. I'm sorr...."

Duran crumpled before he could finish his words.

8

Niberis was lying on the floor, and she couldn't even move the tips of her fingers. She had suffered too serious of an injury. Even if she focused on healing, she wouldn't be healed enough to re-enter the battle. While she was in such a state, their situation was getting worse by the minute.

‘Duran.’

When Duran died, Niberis knew it.

He had been a human saved by her father, Saibein. He had repeatedly distinguished himself in battle, and Duran had risen to a rank where all the Dragon Demons respected him. In truth, he wasn't someone she could order around as if he was an underling beneath her. However, he insisted on acting like a subordinate, because he wanted to repay the favor shown to him by Saibein. He tried his best to help her in any way.

Since she was born to a noble bloodline, she had grown up with everything at her beck and call. She took his devotion for granted.

Moreover, at times, he had an attitude of monitoring her as if she was a child playing near water. She had been annoyed by his mothering, and she considered him to be bothersome.

However, her heart was hurting right now. This was the first time she had experienced something like this since she became an adult. This was the first time she had shed tears for losing someone.

‘Don't be sorry. There is no reason why you should feel sorry.’

For the first time in her life, she hated her own incompetence.

It wasn't as if this was the first time she found her abilities to be deficient. In the past, her pride had taken a big hit when she failed her mission thanks to Azell. She became self-aware that her abilities were lacking, so she had dedicated to re-training herself.

However, it hadn't been enough. She had lost again.

If it was her past self, her pride would have gotten hurt again, and she would have lashed out in anger. However, she hated her own deficiency so much that she couldn't stand herself. It was the reality that she hadn't been able to do anything when someone devoted to her had lost his life... It hurt more than her impending death.

‘Guardian Shadows... Even they are here...’

While Azell was sweeping through his enemies like a gale, the Guardian Shadows appeared as they used the Dragon Sword Duke as a marker they could trace. The Dragon Demon king worshippers were already in poor shape, yet they had lost the numerical advantage. They were now being trampled.

“...Niberis.”

Even in such a situation where she couldn’t do anything, there was a voice murmuring towards her.

Kieren Baldazark.

He was the heir to the great Dragon Demon General Baldazark.

He was the most talented of his generation to be produced from the Plain of Darkness. He was a competitor, who threatened her standing.

“You... At the very least, you must...”

She knew why he struggled to speak even as his voice was filled with pain. She even saw him shedding tears for her. She also knew why he hadn’t hesitated in using his body to shield her.

If she could speak, she wanted to say these words.

‘Duke Baldazark. You were always a crier.’

After her coming of age ceremony, Niberis treated Kieren with a cold heart. The elders tried to trigger her competitive spirit, so they had always compared her to Kieren. It chafed her so much that she couldn’t bear it.

However, she always knew what emotion was in his eyes as he looked at her.

He was so open about it, so how could she not know?

Moreover, the relationship between the two had been completely different before they went through their coming of age

ceremonies.

‘Don’t cry. You look like an idiot. You are the descendent of the great Baldazark. You’ve inherited such noble blood, yet your actions will besmirch your rank.’

Currently, he was considered to be an outstanding individual, but when he was young, he had been a weak crybaby. Unlike Niberis, Kieren had a lot of siblings vying for the honor of being Baldazark’s heir. Even if he had been a crybaby, Kieren had been very talented, so his siblings subjected him to all kinds of torment.

Whenever he cried, Niberis gave a stern scolding, and she was able to correct his mindset. When they were in their childhood, the two of them researched magic, and they always talked about their future. They grew close to each other.

‘Kieren. I’ve never truly hated you, not even once.’

Their positions required them to be antagonistic towards each other. However, after establishing themselves as heirs, she had thought the two of them might have a future together. However, the elder were gripped by the fear of the world, and they were overtaken by the fanaticism towards the Dragon Demon King. The elders damaged the progress of their relationship.

“Niberis.”

Niberis suddenly heard another voice. At the same time, she felt a spike of anger and irritation.

‘Laura.’

Laura had suddenly appeared from nowhere to become her competitor.

Unlike Kieren, Niberis had never met Laura during childhood. After several years after her coming of age ceremony, Laura had suddenly appeared out of nowhere. She had appeared when her predecessor fell by the hands of the Guardian Shadows.

The two of them had never gotten along.

The fact that they were competitors wasn't the only reason. Of course, she was annoyed by the appearance of another competitor, but she was also annoyed by the fact that she didn't know what Laura was thinking.

Niberis felt bad when she looked into her eyes. It was as if Laura was able to ignore all feelings, and it felt as if Laura's eyes didn't attach any value to Niberis.

"Please don't die. I don't like you...no, I don't like all of you, but... Still, if you die, I'll feel bad for Duke Baldazark."

Niberis became angry. Even now, Laura was making her feel annoyed. Could Laura not hold herself back from annoying her even in such a situation?

However, unlike her words, what Laura did next was beyond imagination.

9

Laura had never liked Niberis.

In truth, this wasn't only limited to Niberis. She disliked Kieren, Jeffers, and the Plain of Darkness... She hated everything around her. She detested the beings, who had given birth to her. She detested her upbringing, and she hated that she had become Aunsaurus' heir.

However, she only knew this way of life. She was a Dragon Demon king worshipper, and her role as the heir of Aunsaurus solely defined who she was.

The first memory Laura could recall was around the time when she looked like a 4 year old human child. She opened her eyes in a large glass tube filled with special liquid made by the alchemists.

She had been completely ignorant of her own self until she was pulled out of glass tbe. She had no idea what was going on as she

looked at her surrounding.

‘You are number 47. You should remember that. Well, there is no way you’ll forget it.’

When she came out of the glass tube, she didn’t have a name. At the time, she had exactly 139 siblings, and they were all called by their numbers.

For reference, there were only 139 other beings that were labeled. When she first came out, she saw 10 of her siblings not receive any numbers, and they were sent away to never to be seen again. At the time, she hadn’t known what had happened to them, but now she knew. They had failed to meet some requirement, so they were scrapped.

‘You were all born with the blood of the great Aunsaurus within you. However, only one of you will inherit his name.’

All of her siblings were intelligent, and they had talent in magic. It had only been 1 year since they came out of the the glass tubes, yet they had already learned how to speak and write. When they learned the basic knowledge, they started learning magic.

Of course, a high amount of danger followed anyone, who studied magic. They only had one year to learn the magic in peace. Afterwards, they were ordered to face monsters, and they were told to summon evil spirits using magic....

They faced dangerous situations daily where it hadn’t been surprising to see her siblings die.

During this process, the number of siblings she had dropped steadily. Moreover, a variety of methods were used to measure their abilities and potential. If one failed several times at a task, one would be labeled a failed product. These beings were branded before they disappeared to an unknown location.

After 10 years, half of their original number remained. At that point, all her sibling including herself was able to receive a name

instead of a number.

‘Laura Aunsaurus.’

On the day she was given her first name, Laura was swept up by an indescribable feeling. From the time she came out of the glass tube, she had always been called by a number. As her intelligence and wisdom increased, she realized how demeaning this practice was. This was why she always dreamed of the day when she received her name. She would be accepted as a legitimate and unique individual.

On the day she received her name, Laura repeated her name several hundred times. It was the most she had spoken in a single day since her birth.

Chapter 104 – The Sword That Split The Heavens (7)

The next day Laura realized almost half of her siblings were gone. The chosen received their names, and the rest were culled.

At that point, Laura had a good idea what they were doing.

The Aunsaurus tribe had come up against their limitation. Aunsaurus was one of the 4 great Dragon Demon Generals, and he was a first generation Dragon Demon. Basically, he was born without parents, and his power couldn't be compared to the normal Dragon Demons. Even if his descendants were proud of carrying his blood, there was a clear limitation to their powers.

It wasn't enough to intermarry between Dragon Demons. They needed a more surefire way to gain a talented successor.

As expected of magicians, they came up with an insane solution. If marriage between good bloodlines weren't enough, they would just add magic to artificially make talented offsprings.

This was how Laura and her siblings were born.

In truth, the word 'born' was an inadequate description. Artificial wombs were created using the secret arts of Black Magic. If one didn't use such a method, it would have been impossible to gather over 100 siblings of the same age.

From the beginning, they were made to be the perfect successor of Aunsaurus. They were a product made with great care and effort. Their growth process was a period of time where their makers could check which product was defective or not.

If it ended there, it would have great. However, the Ausaurus family wanted perfection.

Even if there were no defects, they weren't satisfied. They merely wanted the one that transcended beyond all standards. In the end,

they wanted a single exceptional being.

‘The one that never fails will inherit his name. We don’t want failures.’

The failures disappeared one by one. Laura knew what happened to them. In the initial phase, the unnamed ones were sent to the Black Magic research facility to be used as lab rats. If one had received a name, their fate was bound by Black Magic. They were forever forbidden to reveal themselves as they sacrificed their whole lives for the tribe. They became tools for battle.

In the end, the last one standing was Laura.

‘Congratulations. From now on, you are Laura Aunsaurus..’

On the day when all her siblings were gone and she was all alone, Laura became an Aunsaurus. She inherited the cursed Dragon Demon weapon called the Vitan’s Chalice not too long after. Then she was officially introduced to the world through her coming of age ceremony. She had an identity in this world.

Afterwards, Laura lived in an achromatic world. No, if she thought about it, she had exited her glass cage, and she had found the world to be gray. She hated everything that had surrounded her. There was nothing of worth around her. This was true for the bloodline of Aunsaurus, and it even extended to her life, which had been manufactured for her to become the heir.

In such a world, the only thing that could move her hardened heart were her competition.

She was unbelievably jealous of Niberis, who was able to display hate and a competitive spirit towards her. From the start of her life, Niberis never had to doubt her own existence, and she had been revered by everyone around her. Niberis had everything Laura never possessed. This was why she hated and envied Niberis.

It was the same for Kieren. He grew up fighting with his numerous siblings for the honor of being the heir. This was where

all the similarity ended. He was born into the world through a natural process, and he had experienced each steps of his life like a normal being. This was why Laura disliked Kieren too.

However, Kieren was competent, yet in many ways, his heart was absurdly delicate. This was why she looked at him in a slightly more favorable light.

He had everything he could want in this world, yet he ate his heart out as he looked at Niberis. Laura found the situation to be amusing and pitiful.

Still, Kieren treated Laura like a person even though she had been thoroughly molded into being a tool. She had been able to feel human-like emotions through him.

‘I’ll repay my debt right now, Duke Baldazark.’

Laura opened her mouth as this thought crossed her mind. She walked towards the most dazzling being she had ever seen up until now. She headed towards the being that had stirred her heart.

“Azell Zestringer. I have a proposal for you.”

10

Laura dispersed her Dragon Demon weapon, and she walked towards Azell. It was as if she had a death wish. However, she had retracted her Dragon Demon weapon and her defensive magic. She was completely defenseless.

As the white hem of her skirt fluttered, the Guardian Shadows charged towards her. It didn’t matter what she said. They didn’t show any signs of compromise in their actions.

“Wait a moment.”

Azell got in the way of the Guardian Shadows. When he swung his sword, the thunderbolt stretched out to stop the movement of the Guardian Shadows.

“In any battlefield, it isn’t honorable to kill a defenseless person,

who wants to talk.”

「Enemy.....」

「Have to kill... At all cost.....」

「No forgiveness.....」

“That’s your problem. I’ll decide if I want to cut her down after I hear her story. Or are you willing to fight me to see if I’m serious?”

Azell spoke with a cold voice. The Guardian Shadows became confused as they looked at Azell.

「Why.....」

「We have to kill.....」

「But... He.....」

If it was anyone other than Azell, the Guardian Shadows wouldn’t have hesitated to carry out their attack. However, Azell might be the one they had been waiting for. He might be the one foretold in the prophecy, so they put a brake to their actions. In the end, the Guardian Shadows whispered to each other in a heated discussion as they retreated backwards.

Azell yelled out loud.

“Everyone stop!”

His voice rang out like a lion’s roar. Everyone unconsciously stopped fighting, and as if it was a lie, a silence descended on the surrounding.

In this unnatural silence, Laura’s clear voice rang out.

“I’ll surrender myself to you. Instead, I want you to let the rest of my group go.”

“What?”

Azell was dumbfounded.

“Do you really think your proposal is reasonable? You may be

from the bloodline of Aunsaurus, but this is revered only in the Plain of Darkness. Your bloodline is worthless here.”

The Dragon Demon king worshippers were already defeated. Their complete destruction was only a matter of time. In such a situation, why would he let everyone else go, because Laura surrendered herself to him? The sensible move was to slaughter every Dragon Demon King worshippers.

Laura spoke.

“I am well aware of that fact. This is why I’ll give you something of equal value.”

“What do you have that will make me spare their foolish lives?”

“I’ll give you my Dragon Demon weapon.”

“.....!”

Azell, who had been making sarcastic remarks, stopped breathing from the surprise he felt. It wasn’t just him. All of the Dragon Demon king worshippers were taken aback.

“Duchess Aunsaurus! What are you saying!”

Niberis and Kieren were in critical condition. The only one able to speak against her was Jeffers Almarick. He was so surprised that he didn’t even maintain his guard against Leticia. He stared at Laura.

It was a really stupid move.

“I just want to kill you right now... However, I’ll wait and see how this turns out. How unfortunate.”

Leticia had used this opportunity to put the blade of her spear up against Almarick’s neck. From Almarick’s perspective, he had made a really silly mistake.

“Kook.....!”

Laura didn’t pay attention to Almarick’s advice as she continued

to speak.

“I’ll let you inherit my Dragon Demon weapon ‘Vitan’s Chalice’. I believe that is more than enough to strike a bargain.”

“Mmmm.....”

Azell labored over the decision. This proposal was really beyond his imagination. He had to admit it. This expressionless Dragon Demon girl got one over him.

The Dragon Demon weapon could be transferred to another person only if the owner sincerely desires it.

It was impossible to inherit the Dragon Demon weapon by killing or threatening the owner. The Dragon Demon weapons had a form of sentience, so it could discern the true feeling of its owner. If one stole it using threats, it would provoke an unpredictable reaction from the Dragon Demon weapon.

Moreover, it wasn’t a guaranteed she’ll go through with the transfer even if Azell accepted her proposal. If she was willing to sacrifice her own life to kill Azell, the inheritance of the Dragon Demon weapon could...

Laura spoke.

“I want to observe from your side. Maybe, you are the one that will give us the chance to turn back the fate of the king.”

“What are you talking about?”

“If you accept my proposal, I’ll answer any questions you are curious about.”

“Hmmm.....”

“Duchess Ausaurus! Are you betraying us?”

Jeffers had heard enough. He grinded his teeth. From the perspective of a Dragon Demon King worshipper, Laura’s proposal was unacceptable. This was a precious Dragon Demon weapon passed down from the Dragon Demon wars. How could she just

give it away to an enemy? Moreover, she was planning to spill confidential information.

It wasn't as if Laura knew all the secrets, yet the ones she knew could be lethal to them.

All the young Dragon Demons here possessed the highest of pedigree. However, their duty was more important than their lives. Until the day their savior returns, they had to fulfill their duty even if it required the sacrifice of their lives.

Jeffers yelled out.

“Don't make me laugh! This is do or die! Fight! Everyone... Kuhk!”

He couldn't finish the sentence. Leticia unhesitatingly hit his face with the flat of her spear head. Her attack flowed like water to strike him, and Jeffers fell unconscious.

“Even if you fight to the death, there aren't many of you left. How ridiculous.”

Currently, there were only 10 members of the Dragon Demon King worshippers that were in any shape to fight. If the fight started up again, they'll be slaughtered in an instant.

Leticia snorted as she spoke.

“It does make me feel a little bit better. You there. I recommend you don't take this deal. I would love to kill this bastard right now.”

“...Hmmm. Now that I've heard Miss's words, I feel the need to act in a more rational manner.”

“Miss?”

Leticia had on an expression as if Azell had said something very offensive. From her appearance, she did look like a young woman. However, it had been very long, since she had been called by that term.

Azell smirked as he asked her a question.

“Would you like to be called madam?”

He remember having a similar conversation before. At the time, he had been speaking to the Dragon Demon King worshipper named Regina.

Leticia answered him.

“If you want to die, you can call me that.”

“What a scary Miss.”

Azell shrugged his shoulder then he looked at Laura. He looked at her to read her true intentions, but he couldn't. There was no expression on Laura's face, and there were barely any emotions revealed in her eyes.

“All right. I'll accept your proposal. However, I have a condition.”

“What is your condition?”

“I want you to incinerate all the dead bodies here with your hands.”

“.....”

At those words, the Dragon Demon King worshippers became restless. Even Laura showed signs of unrest. However, Azell was adamant.

“If I let them take the intact corpses, won't your side bring back the useful members as Undeads? I'm used to destroying beings returned from the dead, but it isn't as if I enjoy doing it.”

“...all right.”

Laura nodded her head slightly. Azell spoke.

“I want the survivors to be gathered, and they can run away like dogs with their tails lit on fire. I'll give you all three minutes for everyone to get out of my sight. Moreover...”

Azell looked at Kieren, who had wrapped his body around Niberis.

“If you want to say something, I want you to speak it out loud. I don’t like little Dragon Demons talking in secret. This situation has deteriorated too much for me to feign ignorance. If you are recovered enough to use Whispering, you should be able to speak it out loud.”

“H... How...”

Kieren was surprised. He had been secretly Whispering towards Laura, yet Azell seemed to have sensed it.

Azell spoke.

“I accepted her proposal. Guardian Shadows... Will you disagree and go against my decision?”

「We don’t know.....」

「Don’t... understand.....」

「But.....」

「We won’t stand against.....」

In the end, the Guardian Shadows decided to give up on opposing Azell’s will. Then the Dragon Demon worshippers retreated as if a fissure was about to swallow them from behind. Laura created fire as she burned every single corpse to ashes.

Chapter 105 – The One That Chose The Name Soaked In Sin (1)

1

The old Karzark castle lay in waste. As expected of a domain gifted to the man responsible for saving the world, Azell's castle had been well made. However, 200 years had passed, and the majesty and beauty of the castle was nowhere to be seen. It was merely a horrendously destroyed ruin.

Azell watched the ruins, and he was swept up by emotions that were beyond expression.

Azell opened the main door to the castle. He entered into the lounge, and there were stairs on either sides leading up to the second floor. The stairs made a circle. One of the stairway was completely destroyed, and the other one was half destroyed. An old memory overlapped this sight.

‘Young masters! Young mistresses! The stairs are meant to be walked on!’

The steward of Count Karzark was Bazeck. He was an old knight, who had participated in the Dragon Demon war. Moreover, he was a big softie when it came to the children. It was, because he had lost all his sons and grandchildren in the war.

Azell had adopted children, and most of them were not of noble birth. This was why they were a bit short on grace and manners. They treated the fancy castle as a playground. The guardrails on the stairways were treated as slides. Children screamed as they slid down the guardrails, and it troubled Bazeck. However, he could bring himself to give them a strong scolding.

‘Marquis! Please give a scolding to the young masters and young mistresses! How will they be able to make their debut in society?’

‘Eh-eee. It's ok. All children act that way as they grow up. Should

I try it once? In the past, I always wanted to try it when I visited a castle or a mansion.'

'If you want my old eyes to bleed tears of blood, you can go ahead and try it. Do you realize how much gossip goes around when the Count jumps out the window or climb the wall, because it is annoying to climb up and down the stairs!'

'They are probably jealous of me since they can't do what I do?'

'...unfortunately, half of the opinions are on your side. However, how will it look to the other nobles!'

'How do you think it will look? It'll look cool.'

'Cooooooooount!'

...he had exchanged countless conversations just like that.

When he walked up the unstable stairway, he thought he could hear the sounds of children laughing as they slid down the rails. Azell felt tears welling up, but he pressed it down as he went up to the 2nd floor.

"My god. He kept harping about how I have to invest in a good desk.... I can't believe it survived."

Azell had entered his office on the 2nd floor. It was a mess inside. The ceiling and walls had fallen, and there were debris piled everywhere. The floor was also half destroyed.

However, to his surprise, Azell's desk was still there. It had been exposed to rain and wind over a long period of time, so it was all rotten. However, he recognized the desk he used 220 years ago, so he marveled at it.

'Count! Please work inside your office!'

'I have a hard time getting things done in there. It isn't as if I'm shirking my duties. I just want to work with a little wind on my face....'

'You can't go up there with those documents!'

Azell hated working in his office. It was a large room, so it often felt a bit chilly. There was a big window inside the room, and the desk had been put in front of it. He had a hard time concentrating in such a set-up.

This was why Azell always took his documents up to the roof, and he worked as he heard the chirping of the birds. His subordinates developed headaches, because Azell's actions were far from being noble-like. However, in the end, they just accepted it as 'Our lord is just like that.'

"Ha ha ha....."

A dry laugh flowed out of Azell's mouth.

There was no section of the castle that had remained undamaged. It was understandable, since Dragons had swept through here. Still, he could still see a little bit of the outline of its original shape, and his old memories kept washing over him.

Before he knew it, Azell's eyes were flowing with tears. He didn't have the presence of mind to wipe his tears, and he walked without any destination in mind.

His memories and the destroyed reality in front of him overlapped with each other, and he was swept up in his memories.

"...teacher."

Azell arrived at a grave site behind the castle. There was no way the graves would have been left untouched by the rampaging Dragons. It was a mess back there. Still, Azell was able to locate a particular grave.

"If I knew things would turn out like this, it might have been better not to have moved you here."

It was Balf's grave. He was the teacher, who had taught Azell about Absolute Sense. After the Dragon Demon war ended, Azell had moved his remains to his castle. Two hundred twenty years had passed, and many more graves had been added to this site. It

had evolved into a pretty big cemetery.

Balf's tombstone was destroyed, and it had been scatter to the winds. Azell was only able to find the grave, because he was intimately familiar with where it was located at.

Azell spoke.

"I can't do anything right now, but I'll once again provide a nice grave for you. I promise."

Azell wiped his tears away, and he gave his respects towards his teacher's grave.

2

Laura was completely subdued, and she was being watched by Kairen.

Her legs, arms and fingers were all bound meticulously. Moreover, a bit was put in her mouth, so she wouldn't be able to use any spells. Then Azell used a secret technique of Spirit Order to form a magical wedge. These magical wedges were placed in various locations of her Energy Pulse to block the flow of magical energy. There was no way Laura would be able to use her magic.

Azell had wanted a look through the ruins of the old castle by himself, so he had left Kairen behind. It wasn't a good time to be doing such an activity, yet Azell's poor expression stopped Kairen from arguing with him. He just told Azell to do what he had to do.

"I'm back."

Azell returned after an hour. Kairen spoke.

"You came back earlier than expected."

"It feels like I've spent enough time there."

"Your expression was too heartrending, so at the very least, I thought you were going to come back tomorrow."

"If you were ready for such a scenario, maybe I should have taken

my time in getting back here.”

Azell hadn't said anything before he made himself scarce. He had been gone for a pretty long time. He was thankful for Kairen being considerate of him, so Azell smirked in thanks. Then he asked a question.

“How are they doing?”

“They are still recovering.”

Azell was referring to Yuren and Leticia.

They had fought against the Dragon Demon king worshippers, so they weren't classified as enemies. However, both groups didn't trust each other. This was true for Azell and Kairen, and it was also true for Yuren and Leticia. This was why they decided to stay in different locations. They would wait until Leticia and Yuren were well enough to converse.

Azell spoke.

“He didn't look like a healer... He is probably using Black Magic.”

“I believe so.”

Black Magic was the use of magic through taking the life of living beings. If they planned on using humans as a source for their magic, Azell and Kairen would have stopped them. However, the County of Karzark had a surplus of monsters and beasts.

Kairen asked a question.

“Can we trust them?”

“I don't know. I'll have to talk to them first. Personally, I am a bit interested in the Miss Dragon Majin....”

“She seemed to be quite strong. However, the mark against her is the fact that she seems to have some dealings with Black Magic”

They had only briefly aligned themselves with Leticia, but in that short amount of time, they could tell she was a very talented

fighter. Moreover, she was a Dragon Majin, yet here magical resonance was on par with Kairen. However, she was also saturated with the energy of Black magic....

Azell shook his head from side to side.

“No, that’s not the part that interests me.”

“Then what?”

“I only saw it briefly, so I can’t be sure... The way she used her Dragon Arts looked familiar to me.”

“Mmmm?”

“I have to confirm it with her, then I’ll have a better idea. She might have a connection with an acquaintance.”

“An acquaintance... Now I’m curious.”

“I’ll explain it to you later. Anyways, we have to take care of the business in front of us.

Azell looked at Laura. Laura was bound tight, yet she waited patiently with an expressionless face. Azell took the bit out of her mouth, and she took a deep breath.

“Hoo-ah.”

“We’ll question you now. I hope your answer my questions honestly. My magical wedge is deployed, so if you lie, I’ll know it.”

Laura’s expression was so neutral that it would be hard to tell if she was lying. However, Spirit Order dealt with the mind. The magical wedges were placed in her Energy Pulse, and it allowed him to fully control her. It was easy to tell if she was telling the truth or not.

Laura nodded her head slightly.

“Yes.”

Before Azell could ask a question, Kairen suddenly spoke to him.

“So, Azell...”

“Yes.”

“Doesn’t this make us look... Somehow, it feels like we are the bad guys.”

“...I get where you are coming from, and I agree. However, did you really have to say that out loud?”

“I won’t hesitate if it is a straight up fight. However, you are threatening to torture a young lady. This kind of situation is a first...”

Kairen scratched his cheek. From her outer appearance, Laura looked like a beautiful girl around 17 or 18 years old. She had long blonde hair, and amethyst eyes. She had lily-white skin, and she looked like a doll. Moreover, the red dress she was wearing made her look like a innocent young lady from a noble house.

Azell grumbled.

“How is she young? She probably is older than me... Well, I guess from the Duke’s perspective she is young. How old are you?”

“It is rude to ask for a woman’s age.”

“If you don’t answer me correctly, I’ll treat you roughly... It does make me feel shameful for even saying those words.”

“I’m much younger than the Dragon Sword Duke.”

Laura unnecessarily confirmed their suspicion about her age.

Azell grumbled.

“I understand how you feel, but please don’t take the wind out of my sail. We have to be serious right now.”

“I’m sorry. I’ll keep my mouth shut.”

“I’ll ask you again. We won’t ask you for your age...”

“Wait a moment.”

Laura cut off Azell’s words.

“After I answer your question, do you mind if I ask you a question in return?”

“...do you really think you are in a situation to ask me questions?”

“However, that was the reason why I surrendered to you.”

“Well, all right. If I think the question is decent, I’ll answer it. First... What Miss said to me....”

“Laura.”

“Huh?”

“My name. It is Laura. Please call me by my name.”

“Laura Aunsaurus.”

“Please leave the Aunsaurus out.”

“...your demands are getting quite numerous. All right, Laura.”

As Azell conversed with Laura, he could feel the tension starting to bleed away. If Kairen hadn’t said such unnecessary words, the mood wouldn’t have shifted this way... Still, he had to take this more seriously.

“I’ll ask this first. You said I might be the one, who might turn back the king’s destiny. What did you mean by that?”

“Our side is split on how we look at Azell Karzark.”

“One side looks at him as the being with the name soaked in sin... No, that isn’t right. That is a title used for people with the name Azell. Would it be correct in saying the original Azell was the great sinner?”

“Yes. He was the one, who killed the great king. However... According to the Aunsaurus clan and some other minor clans, Azell Karzark was called ‘The being that granted the king the opportunity to turn back his destiny.’”

“Could you elaborate more?”

Chapter 106 – The One That Chose The Name Soaked In Sin (2)

“After the great king caused the Dragon Demon War, it was said that he came to a realization that he had made the wrong choice. However, at that point, he couldn’t turn back on his course of action. As a counterbalance to his mistake, Azell Zestringer had appeared, and he corrected the king’s wrong choice. This gave the king a chance to start anew.... This is the interpretation.”

“...so, this particular interpretation implies Atein’s defeat and death was planned. It was part of his fate? In the end, doesn’t it look like thinly-veiled attempt to leave Atein’s divine status unblemished?”

“I won’t deny it.”

“Then I’ll ask the next question. Is Jeffers Almarick really the descendent of Almarick?”

“Of course?”

Laura was puzzled by the question. Even during the battle, Azell refused to let this question go. Of course, she had thought it was part of a psychological warfare being waged by him. Had she been wrong?

Azell furrowed his brows.

“At the very least, you believe he is. I don’t know what your superiors were thinking.”

“I’m not sure what you are talking about.”

“The guy called Jeffers Almarick doesn’t look at all like Almarick. Of course, if one went just by his appearance, one could overlook the inconsistencies. However, his Dragon Demon weapon differs from the original one. Isn’t that a bit strange?”

“Huh?”

Laura was surprised. Azell spoke as he looked at her reaction.

“Almarick’s Dragon Demon Weapon was called ‘Storm’s Scream’. However, Jeffers was using an entirely different weapon. Why is that? Was it lost over time, and a substitute Dragon Demon weapon was given to him?”

“...that story, where did you hear it?”

Laura couldn’t hide her confusion. Azell had touched on a subject that she never knew about. Everyone within the Plain of Darkness considered Jeffers Almarick to be a direct descendent of Almarick. Moreover, the Dragon Demon weapon ‘Tempest’s Blade’ was also known as being the weapon used by the original Almarick.

Azell spoke after seeing her reaction.

“It seems you didn’t know about it... Hmm. Let me confirm one thing with you. How many of those, who had survived from the time of the Dragon Demon war, reside inside the Plain of Darkness?”

“There are around twenty left.”

“That is smaller than I thought. Who holds the highest position?”

A lot of Dragon Demons had survived the Dragon Demon wars. However, time seemed to have drastically reduced those numbers.

“Dragon Demon Queen.”

“Which consort are you talking about? Aincera? Tedrin? Kayalia? Ah. There is no way Tedrin is still alive.”

“It is Aincera-nim. The other two is dead.”

“Aincera... That woman is pretty useless in terms of battle capability, but her being able to lead an organization is a whole separate issue. I won’t speak about Tedrin, but I’m glad Kayalia is dead. No one knew if she was alive or dead, so I was worried....”

There had been three Dragon Demon Queens married to Atein at

the time. Kayalia was Atein's best pupil, and she possessed awesome combat ability. Aside from the four great Dragon Demon Generals, she was considered to be the strongest magician. In the final battle, she had received a critical wound, but her death hadn't been confirmed. The news that she was dead brought relief to Azell.

"Do you know the names of the survivors?"

"I don't know all of them. I don't know the names of three members."

"That means there are Dragon Demons, who are hiding their identities. Is it correct to say that the survivors of the Dragon Demon war rule over the Plain of Darkness?"

"Correct."

"Give me their names.."

Azell's request was fulfilled by Laura. Azell's expression hardened as she listed their names.

"Some of the big shots are still alive. So the Simpleton Prince... Mmm. Is Saibein dead?"

"He is missing."

"Missing?"

"Around 20 years ago... After he fought the Guardian Shadows, his whereabouts became unknown."

"Hmmm....."

"Niberis appeared to have inherited her Dragon Demon weapon within the past six months. This was why everyone went out to look for him. Afterwards, everyone just assumed he was alive, but the Elders refused to comment on this issue...."

Laura stopped at that point to ask a question of her own.

"May I ask a question too?"

“I still have a lot of questions to ask you.... Well, all right. You’ve been truthfully in y our answers, so I’ll hear you out.”

“Are you perhaps the actual Azell Karzark?”

Azell flinched inside at the question. However, he didn’t show any indication outside.

“Why do you think so?”

“You look exactly like the Azell Karzark I know.”

“...so you’ve been alive for that long?”

“No. The Aunsaurus tribe possesses a lot of records regarding Azell Karzark. Amongst these records, there was a magical recording. You look too much like him to say that you are his descendant.”

“However, there are cases where human descendants look surprisingly like their forefathers.”

“Even if I take that into account, I find my assertion to be true. Moreover.... You just spoke about the Dragon Demon wars as if you had experienced it.”

This point had intensified Laura’s confusion. Azell hadn’t even bothered hiding his choice of words as if it wasn’t a big deal.

Azell smirked.

“I see. Well, my answer is... You are free to believe whatever you want to.”

“.....”

“I’m not obligated to give you an answer. However, you are obligated to answer my questions.”

“...understood.”

Her expression hadn’t changed at all, but Laura’s voice sounded like sulking teenage girl.

Yuren had drawn a magic circle with blood, and he was meditating in a lotus position on top of it.

Leticia stood behind him, and she was on guard. Plenty of monster corpses were strewn around them. Each corpse looked as if it had been sucked dry. This bizarre sight pretty much confirmed what Azell and Kairen had assumed.

“Oooh. I feel much better now....”

How long had it been?

Yuren opened his eyes, and he let out a long breathe.

Leticia asked him a question.

“How much have you recovered?”

“I think I can walk around by myself. Running will be too taxing. If possible, I’ll have to resolve this issue by traveling using magic.”

“If you plan on floating around everywhere, it would be better for you to make a full recovery instead.”

“It isn’t healthy to recover one’s body through stealing the life essence of others. It is a short term solution, but in the long term, it could irreversibly break the balance of one’s life energy. How stupid will it be if your struggle to live becomes the catalyst in you becoming an Undead? If you have the choice, you shouldn’t use Black Magic.”

“You don’t sound like a Black Magician.”

“What choice did I have? The Dragon Demon King worshippers, who would be sent into the field, are taught the basics of Black Magic. I didn’t become a Black Magician, because I wanted to.”

Yuren grumbled. He started learning Black Magic at a very young age. He started to distance himself from Black Magic was only when he escaped the brainwashing of the Dragon Demon king’s worship. It was thanks to the dreams he had of his spiritual guide.

Leticia asked a question.

“So, do you know what your destiny is?”

“I think it has to do with that man over there.”

“Hmm. So the man named Azell is the man of your destiny.”

“...it really sounds weird when you phrase it like that?”

“You can let my words go in one ear and out the other. Anyways, the man is so strong that it is hard to believe that he is human.”

Leticia, who was called the Ice Queen, was a figure of terror for the Dragon Demon king worshippers. Even she shuddered at the level of martial prowess shown by Azell. The officers, who had come out from the Plains of Darkness, were dealt as if they were children....

“I was surprised too. His martial prowess looked inhuman. Moreover... No, I’ll bring it up when I talk to him.”

Yuren had followed the instruction of the guide within his dream to get here. He learned various truths. He also learned information and magic techniques that were never taught by the Dragon Demon king worshippers in the process.....

Leticia spoke.

“All right. We should go meet him. Are you ready?”

“My heart is beating like a boy in puberty..”

“Please I pray your beating heart doesn’t evolve into love.”

“...at times, you sound like a person, who had lived several dozen years in the human world.”

“If it looks that way, it is thanks to the bad influence of my master.”

The two of them headed towards the location occupied by Azell, Kairen and Laura. It was deep into the night, but everyone was awake.

Azell spoke.

“I want you guys to sit at a moderate distance away from us. It’ll be best if we avoid antagonizing each other if possible.”

“I’m thankful for the suggestion. However, if I do that, you’ll be on edge.”

After speaking, Yuren plopped down in front of the magical campfire made by Azell and Kairen. Azell was a bit surprised as he looked at Yuren.

Azell had suggested sitting a bit away from each other as a courtesy to the other group. If they did fight, it would be more advantageous for a warrior if the enemy was sitting nearby.

Azell was aware of this, so he decided both groups should put a moderate distance between each other. However, Yuren had unhesitatingly sat in front of Azell.

“I have no plans of going against you. I’m doing this, because I want that point to be made abundantly clear.”

“However, I could turn hostile against you. Haven’t you thought about such a scenario?”

“Mmm. I don’t think you will after hearing my story.... I think?”

Yuren wasn’t confident, so he added those last words. Leticia snorted.

“You usually roast people with your words. Where did that guy go? Why are you showing such weakness? Is it because you met the man of your destiny?”

“I want you to stop using that phrase. It is very misleading. Anyways, I’ll introduce myself. My name is Yuren Rizester.”

“...Rizester?”

Azell became surprised at his words. It wasn’t just Azell. Kairen was surprised too.

The reason why these two men reacted in such a manner was obvious. It was, because....

‘Is he a descendant of Carlos?’

Rizester was Carlos’ family name.

This explained why the Dragon Demon king worshippers were acting in such a sensitive manner. In some aspects, Carlos was hated more than Azell by the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

Before the shock passed, Laura spoke.

“Ah. So you are the traitor, who chose the name seeped in sin?”

“Yes, heir of Aunsaurus. You probably came here in hopes to catch me.”

Azell perked up at Yuren’s words.

“There is a slight difference in that turn of phrase. You are called the ‘Traitor, who chose the name seeped in sin’... Does this mean you chose to take up that name?”

“Yes.”

“Hmm. I see. You aren’t the descendant of Carlos.”

Azell mumbled as if air had leaked out of him.

However, Yuren quickly spoke again.

“I chose to take up the name, but it is also true that I’m a descendant of Archmage Carlos.”

“What?”

“At the very least, I would like to think so. I look similar to what Carlos looked liked in his early years. Of course, I don’t want to look like him in the latter years.”

“.....”

At his words, Azell narrowed his eyes. It was as he said. Niberis had messed up his face, but Yuren’s brown hair and blue-gray eyes....

‘There is a clear resemblance.’

Chapter 107 – The One That Chose The Name Soaked In Sin (3)

There was a part of him that resembled Carlos. It was undeniable. Normally, Carlos possessed a very cold demeanor, but when he was with Azell, Carlos acted a bit dopey. Yuren, who was in front of him, gave off a similar impression.

However, from Azell's perspective, Yuren was an amalgamation of very troubling elements. He looked similar to Carlos, yet he used to be a Dragon Demon king worshipper. Moreover, he took on the name Rizester as an act of betrayal....

‘Is he really Carlos’ descendant?’

Unlike Azell, Carlos accrued fame even into his latter years as an Archmage. It wouldn't be weird to find out that he had descendants.

“However, Carlos didn't have any children.”

“He didn't officially have any heirs. However, in the nature of things, affairs happen.”

“Mmmm. If that is true.....”

“What if it is so?”

“You'll also go bald when you get old.”

“.....”

Yuren had a dumbfounded expression on his face. Then his face reddened, and he started stuttering his words.

“T...that isn't true! My hair is very thick! Moreover, even if I am Carlos' descendant, there is a several generational gap between me and him. How can you say I'll go bald like him?”

“...it seems you've worried over this topic before.”

Azell chuckled. At the very least, this reaction proved that Yuren

himself believed he was a descendant of Carlos.

“Well, the problem of authenticity can’t be determined right now, so let’s push that aside for now. First, I would like to learn more about both of you. ”

“Hmmm. Doesn’t one normally introduce oneself when asking such a question?”

Leticia was a bit further away, and she asked in a cold manner. Kairen, who had been quiet, stepped forward when he heard her words.

“You are being too harsh. We rescued both of you.”

“...we can’t deny what you did for us. It is a bit annoying, but I guess we are at a disadvantage.”

When Leticia grumbled, Yuren smirked.

“Well, I planned on revealing everything in the first place. You don’t have to be so prickly, Leticia.”

“That is your stance. I don’t plan on taking the same approach.”

“Well, you came along according to my will, so it is already a done deal. Since you stayed silent on the issue, you’ve tacitly agreed to my agenda.”

“Sometimes I have an urge to beat you, and I’m having a hard time holding myself back right now, Yuren.”

“The fact that you are able to hold yourself back like this means you possess a sound mind. Anyways... Mmmm. If you don’t want to talk, you can give a cursory introduction. I used to be a Dragon Demon king worshipper, and I betrayed them.”

4

Yuren didn’t hide anything about his past. He told them how he came to be a Dragon Demon king worshipper, then he talked about how he escaped from their brainwashing. He spoke how he chose the road to being a traitor....

Kairen, who had been listening to the story, furrowed his brows.

“That just sounds too absurd. An unknown voice appeared suddenly in your dreams, and it started guiding you? This was the reason why you betrayed the Dragon Demon king worshippers.... Do you really want me to believe such nonsense?”

“I know it is a hard to believe tale. However, it is the truth. If it wasn't for the dreams sent by my guide, I would still be a Dragon Demon king worshipper. I was made to be loyal through the brainwashing, and I prayed each day for the revival of the Dragon Demon king. Sometimes officers would come to speak to us about the Dragon Demon war, and I was moved to tears by the stories I heard.”

“...does the Dragon Demon king worshippers really live like that?”

“Do you think I'm joking? I'm not. This was especially true at these institutes, which fostered the children. They were very thorough in observing these types of formalities. Moreover, everyone considered it to be normal and natural. From a very young age, we were instilled with the ideology of the Dragon Demon king worshippers, and anything that didn't fall within this ideology was considered to be wrong. Moreover...”

One could make a fanatic through brainwashing. It was almost impossible to reverse this process, yet the Dragon Demon king worshippers weren't satisfied with just that.

“There are tiers to being a Dragon Demon king worshippers. In the end, Dragon Demons are on top, the Dragon Majins are in the middle, and the humans make up the floor. However, they never fully trust a human. This policy may have arose when they suffered defeat at the hands of the humans.”

This was observed when Azell battled and ultimately killed Duran. Duran had dedicated his life to the worship of the Dragon Demon king, and he had distinguished himself numerous times in

battle. He was a human, who was allowed to live inside the Plains of Darkness. However, his advancement ended there. He received very little support compared to the Dragon Demons and Dragon Majins.

“Currently, no ‘humans’ amongst the Dragon Demon king worshippers possess Dragon Demon Qi. Humans aren’t allowed to go through Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.”

Only humans and Dragon Majins could enter into a Dragon Slayer’s Ritual. However, the Dragon Demon king worshippers refused to set up a stage where a human would be able to go through the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.

“Our story strayed a little bit off topic. Anyway, they weren’t satisfied with a thorough mind control regiment.”

All their foods were drugged. This drug was moderately addicting, and a specific smell could put the subject into a state of trance. During the indoctrination of the children, the children was put in a trance state, and the worship of the Dragon Demon King was imprinted deep within their subconsciousness.

“It’s a heinous act. However, it doesn’t end there.”

All children went through a monthly verification process to see if the ideology had taken hold. In the process, the children’s minds were thrown open to be manipulated by magic. Childhood are a time when these children are supposed to develop self-identities. However, they were already in the inescapable grip of the madness.

“I was like that. When I first dreamed of my guide, I wanted to kill myself.”

“Why?”

“Guilt was the main reason. As a Dragon Demon king worshipper, I thought I had committed an egregious sin. I believed I was being successfully tempted by an evil being.”

This was why he told no one about the dreams. In the end, it had been a wise decision for him to do so. If he had told the instructors, Yuren would have immediately been labeled as a failed product. He would have been transferred over to a division where they would have experimented on his body.

“When I had the dream for the first time... It was weird. The things I considered to be obvious no longer seemed to be so obvious inside my dreams.”

As he kept having these dreams, the ideas put into his head was accepted as being illogical. This was the effect of the dream. The ideology ingrained in him felt natural as breathing. However, the ways of the Dragon Demon king worshippers felt weird inside his dream.

A fissure appeared inside his mind. As he kept dreaming about the guide every night, Yuren started to see the madness that was slowly eating him alive. He shook from fear.

“It took me 10 years for me to bring myself to escape that place. As a Dragon Demon king worshipper, I was already a broken product. However, my guide inside my dream gave me methods, which allowed me to hide this fact.”

At an early age, Yuren was classified as a candidate for becoming a magician. He learned magic from childhood. His instructors were thorough in teaching Yuren about practical Black Magic. There were also children, who were taught traditional magic, since they would be sent to infiltrate the outside world. However, Yuren wasn't part of that group.

During all of this, Yuren was simultaneously being instructed by the guide inside his dreams. He learned magic that weren't taught by his instructors. After 10 years, Yuren far outstripped his instructors. He developed into being a magician able to rival the Dragon Demon officers from the Plains of Darkness.

“I never found out the identity of my guide. I still do not know.

In truth, I am not totally comfortable with the guidance I received. The guide taught me how to call and control a Demon. However, at the very least, I don't think the guide is a Demon."

"It is still a possibility. The Demon race possesses knowledge of unknown origin. Their goal is to lead humans to destruction using this knowledge...."

Azell spoke. Not many people knew about the Demon race. Unless one was a Black Magician, there was no need for one to approach the Demons. However, during the Dragon Demon wars, Carlos had approached the Demon race to gain a power that'll destroy the hopelessness hanging over the world. The knowledge he had gained had been worth the risk.

Yuren let out a bitter laugh.

"Still... If it wasn't for my guide, I would have never found myself. I would have wasted away as a tool for the Dragon Demon king worshippers. This is why I trust it. Even if my guide was a Demon working towards my destruction, I am still thankful. I was given an opportunity to perish as a human."

After he spoke, Yuren hesitated before he put a disclaimer to his statement.

"...Ah. Of course, if it is really leading me down a path of destruction, I'll direct my hatred and resentment towards it with my last breath."

"Pfft."

Azell let out a laugh at those words. Yuren clear his throat before he spoke again.

"Hmm hmm. The guide inside my dream said I'll meet the man of my destiny here. It said that this person would remind me of Azell Karzark, who had defeated the Dragon Demon king. It seemed my guide was right."

"Azell Karzark....."

Azell let out a bitter laugh. If Yuren found out he was the actual Azell Karzark, he was curious as to what kind of expression would appear on Yuren's face.

Azell spoke.

"In truth, your story is highly suspicious, and it has a lot of holes. The only part that is trustworthy is the fact that you opposed the Dragon Demon king worshippers."

"I know my story is hard to believe."

"I don't particularly like conspiracy theories, but... This might have all been scripted by the Dragon Demon king worshipper. Isn't that so? You opposed Niberis, and you almost died in the process. However, that can be faked."

"However, the Dragon Majin officers were almost wiped out by you. I'll point out that fact as a point in my favor."

"Maybe, they underestimated me. Moreover, during the Dragon Demon war, the Dragon Demon king even threw his children away as bait if the battle was important enough. It isn't too farfetched to think that the Dragon Majin officers were used as baits."

"If you are so highly suspicious... Mmmm. There is no way I'll be able to earn your trust. In the first place, I knew the story of a guide within my dreams sounded baseless."

Yuren let out a bitter laugh.

After staring at Yuren for a brief moment, Azell asked a question to Laura.

"What do you think, Laura?"

"...you are asking for my opinion?"

Laura was taken aback.

Why would he ask for her opinion in such a situation?

The reason being Azell could now tell if Laura was speaking a lie

or not. Her words would give another data point, which Azell could use to come to assess the situation.

Chapter 108 – The One That Chose The Name Soaked In Sin (4)

Laura spoke.

“First... Everything he told you was the truth.”

“They really gather humans, and brainwash the human to make them into members of the organization?”

“Yes. It isn’t something I saw myself, and I haven’t participated in it. However, I do know it has been going on. It is as he said. Everyone within the Plains of Darkness has an inherent distrust of humans. The humans are viewed as beings that will eventually be ruled, but since they can’t be trusted, the normal convention is to train them thoroughly. These humans are molded into tools, and one of the more popular strategy is to infiltrate the human society using them. They won’t be detected by the Guardian Shadows if their identities as Dragon Demon king worshippers was never exposed.”

“.....”

Azell’s body shook from rage. It wasn’t enough that they were manipulating the world from behind the scene. They were trampling the rights of humans. They took away innocent children, and their human nature was destroyed to make tools that will move to their whims. This was something they hadn’t even dared to do during the Dragon Demon War.

‘No. Maybe, they had no reason to try this during the Dragon Demon War....’

This wasn’t an open warfare being waged against the humans. They had created a secret society within the darkness, and as they bided their time, they were making the world sick. This was why they were using such methods. Moreover, if they focused their plan on only the Dragon Demons and Dragon Majin, they would

run into the problem of being short on manpower. This was why this method was so effective for them.

After looking at him for a brief moment, Laura continued to speak.

“The existence of Yuren Rizester was a highly sensitive issue amongst the senior officers. It was such a problem that we were pitted against each other in a race for his capture. From the information I received, he had already destroyed over 10 secret facilities, and he had killed a lot of Dragon Demon king worshippers. He even infiltrated the developmental institutions to assassinate the trainers... We also received reports that something incomprehensible was occurring....”

“I’m guessing you are talking about my work in undoing the brainwashing done to the specimens used for experiments.”

Yuren glared at her as he spoke. Laura received his sharp gaze, but she nodded in an indifferent manner.

“Yes. I’ve heard there had been several incidents before. This was why the risk posed by you was upgraded to the highest category.”

“It was the dreams from the guide.”

“Mmm?”

“I’m able to transmit the dreams I receive from my guide to other people. This isn’t just a one on one event. I’m able to sync the dreams of large number of people. The only limitation is the fact that the people have to be within the range of my magic.”

“Is this some kind of a Dream Technique?”

Azell intruded into the conversation. In the past, Azell had manipulated Enora’s dream after she was overwhelmed by a frightening experience. Spirit Order, Dragon Arts, and magic.... They all possessed techniques dealing with the mind. One could use these techniques to plant illusions using dreams. There were even techniques that allowed one to control the mind of others.

Yuren gave a reply.

“I think it is something similar. I don’t know about the other institutions, but the children being used in experiments.... These children do not know their fate even when they are about to be slaughtered. Without the children’s knowledge, they judge whether if the children are suited to become their tools or not. The children, who are considered to be disqualified, suffers a fate worse than death.”

Yuren had attacked locations where they used children for Black Magic experimentation or as sacrifices for summoning the Demons. When he destroyed the facilities of the Dragon Demon king worshippers, he was able to gain information regarding such sites. Yuren couldn’t ignore it.

“But... Maybe if we....”

“Yuren. I told you to shut your mouth in regards to that issue.”

“.....”

Yuren was about to speak words expressing his regret, but Leticia shot back at him with cold words. In the end, Yuren hadn’t been able save a single specimen being used for experimentation. Only the two of them survived the escape attempt. Yuren had instigated their escape, yet all of the children, who had been used in the experiments, had died.

“...I’m sorry. Anyways, I sometimes wonder if the guide is watching me even at this moment from nearby. If a powerful magician was watching over me to talk to me through the dreams, it would be easier for me to accept this situation.”

“I don’t feel any gazes on us....”

Azell mumbled those words as an afterthought.

Leticia reacted to his words.

“Are you saying you mastered the ‘Gaze Detection’?”

“That means you learned it too?”

“That is surprising. In recent times, the only ones to mastered that technique, are the Dragon Demon King worshippers residing within the Plain of Darkness.....”

She continued to speak.

“Anyways, I agree with your opinion. I’ve travelled with this guy for only a month, but I’ve never felt any strange gazes on me.”

“So does this mean you weren’t comrades with Yuren prior to a month ago?”

“I didn’t know him at all. I had come across a facility of the Dragon Demon king worshippers. I was about to attack when I encountered him. Since our goals coincided, we decided to work together. I was unlucky.”

Leticia grumbled. After the conclusion of that particular task, she had been dragged into Yuren’s absurd stories about his dreams.

After looking at her for a brief moment, Azell spoke.

“As I said before, I don’t like conspiracies.”

“Mmm?”

Yuren and Leticia was puzzled when Azell spoke those words out of nowhere. Azell continued to speak.

“It is inevitable to keep thinking up conspiracy theories to come up with an explanation... I don’t like conspiracy theories, so let’s not talk about my suspicions for now. I’ll just keep my eyes on you all.”

“What the hell?”

Yuren couldn’t hold back his laughter. As he laughed, Yuren spoke to Azell.

“Let us cooperate with each other for a while. We can share information regarding the Dragon Demon king worshippers, and

we can pool our strength to fight them.”

“Thank you. I’ll work hard not to disappoint you too much.”

“You better. If you betray me, I’ll cut you down.”

“.....”

Azell let out a cold laugh as he spoke, and Yuren gulped.

5

Soon Azell turned to Laura as he spoke.

“Well, I’ll take my time in talking to both of you... I still have questions I have to ask this person here. You guys can listen in.”

“I also want to ask you another question.”

“If you truthfully answer my question, I might think about answering one more of your question.”

“You probably won’t give me a proper answer.”

“It depends on the question.”

At Laura’s grumbling, Azell answered in a sly manner.

“Anyways, I’ve always been curious about one thing... Why did you guys try to kidnap the Dragon Demon Princess and the Dragon Demon Prince of the Rulain kingdom? Ah. Is it true that you guys think they might be blood-related to Atein?”

“That’s correct. How did you... I gave you the clues.”

“I thought you intentionally dropped the clue, so I could figure it out. If that wasn’t your intention, you were very careless.”

“Until that moment, I have never failed before... I never planned for the eventuality of me losing.”

Laura still had a blank expression on her face, but she was acting a bit coy. It made her seem young. Azell asked her a question.

“So the two of them are blood-related to the numerous offsprings left behind by Atein..”

“It isn’t a certainty. The senior officials of our organization believed that the current generation of the Rulain Kingdom’s royal family show the clearest characteristics that indicated that they hold the blood of Atein.”

In the Dragon Demon Royal Family, it was very rare for the Dragon Demon Princess to become the next Dragon Demon Queen. The Dragon Demon Queen usually was a Dragon Majin or a Dragon Demon married into the Royal Family. When the Dragon Demon Queen has children and the children grows up safely, the queen is given a different title, and she is allowed to live a new life afterwards. Then a female Dragon Majin or a Dragon Demon from a different family was picked to become the next Dragon Demon Queen.

The current Dragon Demon Queen was a retired Guardian Shadow. She was the daughter of a family totally unrelated to the Dragon Demon Royal family. However, unbeknownst to her, she was a descendant of Atein. However, there was another reason why the Dragon Demon king worshippers were targeting the children instead of her.

“I don’t know everything, but the current Rulain Royal Family has a very strong trace of Atein’s blood.”

Basically, Atein and Seigar were a product of two of Atein’s descendants marrying each other. They had special characteristics present his descendants, and they were worth monitoring by those in the Plain of Darkness. The fact that they possessed Dragon Demon magic compared to other Dragon Majins and Dragon Demons was a huge indicator.

Azell furrowed his brows.

“I see. Still, I don’t see why that would merit the targeting of those two? I would understand it if they were direct descendants, but there are several generations gap. Why obsess over descendants so far removed from the direct line of descent?”

“They are ingredients that’ll be used to complete the King’s Bowl.”

“Mmmm?”

Laura looked at the puzzled Azell, and she casually dropped a shocking truth.

“The official up high believe that the King’s revival is imminent. They just need the Bowl that’ll hold the soul of the King. The King will once again be born into the world. The Rulain Kingdom’s Dragon Demon Princess, and the Dragon Demon Prince were chosen to be the materials that’ll be used to made this happen. ”

“What?”

Azell was struck dumb by the statement. It wasn’t just him. Everyone gathered there was also struck dumb.

6

Leone was a Keeper of the Prophecy. The Undead Zeta followed him around, and Zeta was one of the ‘Sleepless Guardians’. Basically, his memory as a human was muddled

It couldn’t be helped. It was similar with the evil spirits. Undeads had a hard time remembering anything other than memories of deep attachments.

This was also the reason why Undeads lose their minds easily, and they step into a path of destruction. The memories of sensation one felt in real life is forgotten, and one’s reasoning skill starts to slip in a sporadic manner. The loss of one’s reason lead to insanity.

In terms of those problems, Zeta and the other ‘Sleepless Guardians’ were very special. They lost many memories, but they remembered how to fight. Moreover, the memories after they became an Undead was crystal clear. They had lived as Undeads for several dozen years, yet their sense of reason remained intact. Of course, one of the memories that remained intact was the memory

of how they died.

Zeta was also murdered by the Demon King worshippers. His whole life was destroyed then he lost his family. In the end, his life was also taken.

However, there was a difference between Zeta and the other Guardian Shadows. Keeper of the Prophecy Leone witnessed Zeta's end. Zeta had received a critical wound when he attacked the Dragon Demon king worshippers in an act of revenge. Leone had shown up with the other Guardian Shadows, and they had been a step too late. Leone asked Zeta a question as he faded away from life.

‘Do you want revenge? Do you want it even if you be tormented, and you will never find peace again?’

...he hadn't even needed to think over his answer. He made a contract with Leone, and he had forgotten his name. He became a being, who was fueled by grudge. He became Zeta.

Chapter 109 – The One that Chose the Name Soaked in Sin (5)

Afterwards, he had killed countless Dragon Demon king worshippers. Leone wandered around the continent as he located the Dragon Demon king worshippers, and he assassinated them. While doing so, he kept hope for the day when the prophesied person would show up.

In the past several dozen years, Leone escaped numerous near-death experiences. Usually, the Keepers of Prophecy prioritized keeping themselves alive instead of assassinating the Dragon Demon King worshippers. Their existence was solely for the prophesied being that'll show up one day. However, Leone possessed a deep grudge that caused his rationality to dim. This was why he often walked into danger.

Just like now.

<Leone.>

Zeta held Leone in his arms as he called out Leone's name. However, Leone had lost consciousness, so there was no response.

A cloud of dust was rising in front of them.

An explosion of great power had blown away a portion of the forest. Zeta had rescued Leone with exquisite timing, yet Leone's body had been torn into shreds.

<Unfortunately, I won't be able to say my goodbye to you. I'm dead, yet I have grown somewhat fond of you.>

Zeta put Leone on the floor as he spoke.

<Could you give him a message for me, Zares?>

"...I would have said to tell him yourself, but I can't say such heartless words. All right. What message do you want me to deliver to him?"

<Please thank him on my behalf. That'll be enough.>

“Understood. I'll be sure to deliver your message.”

Zares was breaking out in cold sweat. He had almost died earlier. He was almost swept up in the explosion. If the Dragon Demon Undead Delta hadn't put him on his shoulder and ran away, he would have been dead.

Delta spoke as he tossed Zares on the ground.

<I'll let Theta accompany you. Will that be enough for you to run away with Leone?>

“Ughh. You treat Leone with care, yet you just throw me around like a sack. Why is there such a difference in how we are treated?”

<You should place a hand over your heart, and ask that question to yourself. I'm sure you know the answer. Anyways, I want you to run away as fast as you can. I know you are weak enough to be blown away like the flame of a candle facing a wind. However, you are very good at running away.>

<Hmmm. However, I need to point out that a versatile mage like me should stay behind instead of the two sword-swinging brute.>

The Undead Magician Theta spoke in a crooked manner. Delta gave a retort.

<It doesn't matter, who stays behind. We won't be able to buy much time either way. I think a versatile bastard like you should be detached to the group running away....>

Delta couldn't finish his words. An explosion rang out from the other side of the forest.

Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah!

The cloud of dust parted, and a powerful seismic wave came towards them. A terrifying impact rammed into the barrier put up by Theta, and an explosions occurred.

Ggwah-gwah-gwahng!

Delta spoke.

<...see? I want you to take the kids, and get lost in a versatile manner.>

<Understood. Since you are already dead, I won't have the chance to meet you again after your death. I hope you travel to a good place.>

<What kind of a farewell is that? I have nowhere to go after this.>

Delta let out a hollow laugh as he turned away. Theta used his magic to lift Zares and Leone. He was about to get out of there at high speeds.

Delta mumbled to himself.

<The number of Guardian Shadows left is 62.... No, there are 61 left. I think it'll be best for us to gather all of them before they all disappear. What do you think?>

<I agree.>

Zeta and Delta could identify and order the nearby Guardian Shadows. When the battle started, there had been around 100 Guardian Shadows gathered here. They had been confident that they would be able to kill their enemies, since Zeta, Delta and Theta was present too.

However, they were sorely mistaken.

There were much more enemies than expected. Moreover, there was a ridiculous monster amongst them.

Hooooooooooooo!

The violent gust of wind pushed away the cloud of dust. A silhouette of a person appeared from within the dust.

No, it wasn't a person. The two thick horns on his head gave away that he was a Dragon Demon, but this wasn't the issue. It wasn't right to refer to a dead corpse as a 'person'.

<Hoo hoo. Jeez. You guys are the Guardian Shadows. I've heard a lot about you guys, but you guys are more annoying than I had imagined.>

The being that was confronting the Guardian Shadows was the same as Delta. He was a Dragon Demon Undead.

However, one could tell at a glance that he was different from Delta. The evil energy of the Black Magic flowed around him. He wore black armor above his bones, and he looked similar to a Skeleton Knight. However, his size was much bigger. It made one wonder if he was really a Dragon Demon.

He was almost 3 meters tall. Moreover, his armor was twice as thick as a normal armor. He moved wearing an abnormally bulky armor, and he was like a small moving mountain. He was imposing.

His hands held an large battle hammer. The head of the hammer was three times larger than a person's head. The shaft was almost 2 meters long. The very thought of a human wielding such a hammer was preposterous.

Its outer appearance was also bizarre. It was as if it was carved out of ivory. The head and the shaft had same texture and color of white. Moreover, only one side was designed for impact. The back of the hammer was intricately carved with a face of a man.

<Anyways, I have business with the live ones, yet only the dead ones stayed behind... I guess I'm not popular.>

<Aren't you also dead, Reygus?>

Delta took a dig at the other being.

The large Undead Dragon Demon was one of the four Dragon Demon Generals, who had followed the Dragon Demon king during the Dragon Demon War. He was, 'The Hammer that swallowed the scream of the land', Reygus.

After he died during the Dragon Demon War, he kept existing by

becoming an Undead. The bizarre battle hammer was a symbol of Reygus. The Dragon Demon weapon was called 'The Seal of the Broken Soul'.

Reygus laughed.

<I guess so. Well, I'll let the living handle the living. How about we settle our business amongst the dead?>

Reygus hadn't come here by himself. In the first place, the Guardian Shadows had come here, because there was a large group of Dragon Demon king worshippers gathered here. It seemed they purposefully revealed their location to lure in the Guardian Shadows here.

Reygus spoke.

<You guys chase after ones that ran away.>

"Reygus-nim. We can't....."

Dragon Demons and Dragon Majins appeared from within the dust cloud. Each of them were officers within the Plain of Darkness. They all possessed great power.

If this was a normal circumstance, they would take orders from no one. However, even if he was an Undead, Reygus was basically nobility to them.

<This is my first time being inserted into a live battle.... However, by looking at what I was able to do for a warm-up earlier, it proves that you guys don't have to worry about me. Rest easy. Moreover, it'll be much easier for me to use my power if no allies are nearby.>

"Understood. Well, then....."

The Dragon Demons and Dragon Majins followed Reygus' will. They left.

Theta and Zeta tried to stop them, but in a flash, a terrifying energy surrounded their bodies.

“Koohk.....!”

It was the power of a black curse, and it felt as if an invisible hand was pressing down on them. In fact, the black curse became denser as time passed, and it started to exhibit physical effects.

Pah-jeek! Pah-jee-jee-jeeek!

The Black Magic, which maintained the Undeads, started to clash with the new magic as black sparks erupted.

Theta and Zeta was slowly being pushed back. Normally, they possessed powers much greater than an Undead, yet their combined power was being pushed back by Reygus.

<Mmmm!>

Zeta stepped forward to swing his sword. When he swung his sword, a black wave erupted to cut the power that was pushing them backwards.

When the gridlock was broken, Zeta quickly sent 30 Guardian Shadows after their enemies. Then he asked Reygus a question.

<How did you know we'll come here?>

This was a trap from the start. Reygus and the officers from the Plains of Darkness had been waiting for them. The appearance of the officers were considered to be a possibility, but the existence of Reygus had transcended expectation even for the Guardian Shadows.

‘I never expected the four great Dragon Demon Generals to be this strong. Was he stronger when he was alive? Or did he get stronger after death like us?’

The Guardian Shadows were strong. Each Guardian Shadows possessed a very threatening amount of power, but their powers increased rapidly as more gathered in a single location.

Then there were the beings that existed to command the Guardian Shadows. Basically, the existence of Theta and Zeta, who

were the ‘Sleepless Guardians’, had a big synergistic effect on the Guardian Shadows. This was why they hadn’t been afraid of the officers from the Plain of Darkness.

If Reygus wasn’t here, the Guardian Shadows would have won. However, Reygus’ power was beyond imagination. When Reygus swung his Seal of the Broken Soul, the mountaintop was blown away, and the several hundred meter stretch of trees were uprooted. In terms of destructive power, it was akin to fighting a Dragon.

‘Still, he isn’t at a level where we can do nothing to him. Still, it is unfortunate that we’ll cease to exist after this.’

There were a total of eight Keepers of the Prophecy. Aside from their newest member Zares, every one of them possessed ‘Sleepless Guardians’. If two Keepers of the Prophecy and their Sleepless Guardians were gathered in the same location, it would be possible to stand up against Reygus.

At that point in his thought process, Zeta became suspicious. No matter how he thought about it, this was too weird. Reygus was an ace card that had been hidden up until now by the Plain of Darkness. The fact that he had shown up in front of the Guardian Shadows meant that there was something here that was worth revealing the secret.

The Plain of Darkness didn’t really know about how the Guardian Shadows were structured, but they knew that the Keepers of Prophecy were special. If they could lure and kill all the Keepers of the Prophecy, maybe they might have thought it was worth the risk.

Still, how did they track the Keepers of Prophecy? They would have needed their precise location to set up this trap. When he asked this question, Reygus didn’t even bother hiding the information.

<It is simple. We can tell when our own people are killed. We just

tracked you guys through that.>

<...so all the men we killed arriving at this location were intentional sacrifices?>

<No, it isn't anything like that. We were practical in our use of data. We just matched your whereabouts with the deaths.>

Dragon Demon king worshippers were scattered all over the world. However, the information gathered in their deaths were gathered, and sent to the Plain of Darkness. Aincera was encased within the Great Darkness, and it was possible for her to connect to others linked to the Great Darkness. They could be anywhere on the continent, and Aincera would be able to contact them instantaneously. This network allowed her to gather and analyze information. She was able to respond to any situation in an abnormally fast manner.

The Keepers of Prophecy had appeared when the Plain of Darkness tried to kidnap the Dragon Demon Prince Seigar. Afterwards, a great amount of effort was put in to keep track of the Keepers of the Prophecy. The result of this effort allowed Reygus to ambush the Guardian Shadows.

Reygus placed the head of the Seal of Broken Soul on his palm as he spoke.

<Hmmm. I guess I don't have to ask this question to the living. You guys might know about it too.>

<What are you talking about?>

<I have only one question I want to ask you guys.>

He asked the question as blue flames ignited from the eye sockets of Reygus' skull.

<Carlos. Where did you hide that tough to kill human?>

Chapter 110 – To the Land of the Demons (1)

1

There was always an end to every fight. Countless wars ended to become a part of history, and some of them became legends that people remembered for all times.

The Dragon Demon war was the largest war recorded in history.

The people, who were living through it, felt as if they were in a never ending hell. The act of being alive each day was painful, and the world was filled with the laments of the despairing people.

However, even this long war had to come to an end. People ran forward as they burned all their reservoirs of energy to be able to see the end. When the end started to come into view, everyone became disconcerted.

It was the night before the final battle. Azell and Carlos was sitting in front of each other. An important fight was ahead of them, so there was no alcohol being shared between the two. No one would have blamed them if they had hit the bottle to fall asleep amidst this tiring war. However, the two of them were placing their fate on the impending fight, so they didn't want to do anything they would regret later.

“The elders would laugh if they could hear my words....”

Carlos let out an embarrassed laughter.

“I didn't expect to live long enough to see the end of the war.”

“You should never repeat those words to the elders.”

Azell smirked as he rebuked Carlos.

At that point, it had been 17 years since the Dragon Demon Wars had erupted. However, it wasn't as if the world had been peaceful before the start of the Dragon Demon war. Wars used to break out in various locations, and the fights had escalated. However, at

some point, Atein named himself as the Dragon Demon King, and he started a war to conquer humanity.

Azell and Carlos had spent most of their lives in hardship and frustration as the Dragon Demon war had started in their childhood. For the two of them, the Dragon Demon war had always been in the background of their lives. They couldn't imagine what they would do when the Dragon Demon war came to an end. They hadn't even dreamed about such possibilities.

Carlos spoke.

"I won't. I don't want to hear what they have to say. But..."

"I understand what you are feeling right now."

"Right..."

"However, all of that... It'll only be possible if we win tomorrow."

The stage of the final battle was set. The allied forces had surrounded the final stronghold. It was where all the remaining Dragon Demon king's army was gathered. They had surrounded the 'Dragon Horn Fortress'.

After the long era of darkness, it was almost a miracle that the allied forces were able to gather hundreds of thousands of fighters. There had been too many deaths, and there were too few children born and raised during this era.

The warriors continued to fall in battle, and the ones that weren't warriors had to become warriors. They had no choice if they wanted to survive. Now the end was in sight, and they all gathered to see the end of this war.

Carlos spoke. He wasn't really speaking to Azell. It was as if he wanted to hear himself speak.

"We can win this. No, there is no way we will lose."

"I know."

The allied forces had methodically piled up victories, and their enemies were cornered now. In terms of numbers, the allied forces had an overwhelming advantage compared to the Dragon Demon army inside the Dragon Horn Fortress. Normally, one would count this as a victory.

However, they couldn't do so, because Dragon Demon King Atein was waiting for them inside the fortress.

“All our preparations are complete. You just have to defeat that bastard.”

In the final battle, Azell would have to fight one on one with Atein.

This was the plan concocted by the leaders of the allied forces. While the large army lay siege to the fortress, an elite force would infiltrate the castle within the Dragon Horn Fortress. They would create a situation where Azell and Atein would be able to fight one on one.

The reasoning behind this plan was simple. If Atein wasn't tied up in a one on one battle, the allied forces wouldn't be able to hold up against Atein's attacks. It would be calamitous.

Atein was ultimate magician.

Atein was able to casually do tasks that defied all magical intuition and magical theory known to this world. If an Archmage of Atein's caliber was able to engage the large army, all the high ranking magicians would be tied up in trying to stop Atein.

This was why someone had to get close Atein, so he wouldn't be able to pay attention to the battlefield. However, only a very small elite unit could infiltrate the castle when two large armies clashed. This elite unit would have no choice, but to fight Atein while surrounded by their enemies.

If the allied forces wanted to win this war with the limited resources they possessed, they needed a viable challenger, who will

be able to last against Atein in an one on one battle. It didn't matter if this person didn't win. The most important part was to stay alive until the outcome of the war was determined.

There was also a simple reason why Azell had taken on this mission. It was determined that only he would be able to go toe to toe with Atein in an one on one fight.

Atein was the ultimate magician, yet at the same time, he was in possession of numerous Dragon Demon weapons.

Normally, a Dragon Demon or a Dragon Majin chose to either wield magic or a Dragon Demon weapon. The techniques for both discipline arose from the same root. This was why they had similar special characteristic, yet the techniques was markedly different. This was why if one chose to train both paths to the extreme, one became stuck somewhere in the middle. One wouldn't be able to become good in either disciplines.

However, Atein was special. He was a transcendent magician, and at the same time, he was a terrifying warrior.

Carlos spoke.

"It'll be ok. Atein is a terrifying existence, but you can win against him. You've already done it before."

"I was able to strike him, because I ambushed him. It had been possible, because Reshoo had acted in an unpredictable manner. This is the first time I'll fight Atein in a fair fight."

Reshoo was Azell's fourth teacher. He wasn't affiliated with either the allied forces or the Dragon Demon king's army. He had instigated a fight with Atein, and when Reshoo was in mortal danger, Azell had entered the battle. He was able to grievously wound Atein.

Carlos spoke.

"It'll be different this time. You have something that'll put you on equal footing with Atein."

Atein possessed 13 Dragon Demon Weapons. Each of the Dragon Demon weapons possessed earth shattering power, yet he was able to use several Dragon Demons at the same time.

If Atein brought out multiple Dragon Demon Weapons to use large scale magic, he was unstoppable. He was able to create consecutive phenomena that was akin to natural disasters. It would smash the battle lines of the allied forces. From the allied force's perspective, they had to make sure that Atein didn't enter into the battlefield.

There were numerous beings, who possessed multiple Dragon Demon weapons. These weapons could be transferred to others. However, there were only three beings, who were able to summon multiple Dragon Demon weapons at once.

It could be done by Atein, Azell and Duke Croix Nidel. Duke Croix Nidel was a veteran knight, and he was the allied force's best technician. However, his power was lacking compared to Atein and Azell. Duke Nidel possessed four Dragon Demon weapons, and he could summon two at the same time.

Azell was the same as Atein. He possessed 13 Dragon Demon weapons. These were keepsakes left behind by his dead comrades. The Dragon Demon weapons had been transferred to him by them.

Suddenly, Carlos grinned.

"Truthfully, I'm envious of you."

"What are you talking about?"

"You will be on the brightest stage, and you will have the most important part to play in it. After tomorrow, the bards in the future will sing about the hero Azell. I'll probably be relegated to one of your nameless comrades, who stood next to you as you killed Atein. Now that I think about it, it feels like I'm receiving the short end of the stick. Jeez."

"We still haven't fought the battle yet. Why are you talking about

the distant future?”

“It’ll happen. We’ll become legends tomorrow. The world doesn’t revolve around certain people, but tomorrow... For one day, the world will revolve around us.”

Azell looked at him for a moment, and he put on the same grin as Carlos.

“Yes. I’m sure it will.”

2

It was the present. Dragon Demon war had been over for 223 years.

A cold silence had descended inside the ruins of the Count Karzark’s castle. It was because, the blonde haired Dragon Demon girl, who had her whole body restricted, had spoken the truth.

“.....”

The Dragon Demon King’s revival was imminent.

This was a belief shared by all Dragon Demon King worshippers. They believed time was just something that had to be endured, and their belief would be proven true. The great Dragon Demon king would return to this world, and he would change this world into the way it should be.

The existence of this belief was the reason why the worship of the Dragon Demon king hadn’t died off. Within their religion, they believed the Dragon Demon king was able to transcend the providence of this world.

It had been 223 years since his death, and he was about to revive. It was occurring as prophesied. The Dragon Demons within the Plain of Darkness was sure of this truth.

“You guys.....”

When he heard Laura’s story, Kairen spoke as if her words was preposterous.

“You guys really believe it is possible for a dead being to come back to life? Are we talking about making an Undead through Black Magi? Or will he come back to his original living body?”

“When our king was alive, he was basically like the living history of this world. He was an existence that had transcended the common sense of magicians. If you had the chance to see the relics left behind all over the world by him, you wouldn’t think returning from death to be particularly difficult for him.”

“.....”

“You’ve already seen the result of magic that’s akin to a wish. You have seen the Guardian Shadows. They are an example of how illogical it can be.”

“At the very least, you guys seem to believe it. I guess it makes sense. The belief in his revival had basically kept you guys going for 200 years. However...”

“No. Wait a moment.”

Azell cut off Kairen’s words. He asked Laura with a serious expression on his face.

“How long until Atein revives?”

“...Azell?”

“You guys went to the trouble of kidnapping Dragon Demon royalty from outside. At the very least, this means you don’t have the people you need inside the Plain of Darkness. Or maybe you guys failed in making something for him. Is that right?”

“Azell. Do you really... Are you actually taking her seriously?”

Kairen asked the question as if he couldn’t believe what he was hearing. However, Azell didn’t even turn around as he answered the question.

“Yes.”

“.....”

“I don’t know if it is possible or not. However, I had a friend with excellent judgement speak regarding this problem. He said it was possible, so I trust him. The worst possible outcome may be staring us in the face right now. If we don’t believe it, we might be hit in the back of the head when we aren’t looking. It would be better to be safe, and look back at this event in dejection and relief.”

Last time, Carlos had appeared in Azell’s dream, and he left a message saying Atein might be able to revive. This was why he believed Laura’s words. Whether it was the past or now, Azell always trusted Carlos in regards to any topics related to magic.

Azell spoke.

“In the Dragon Demon war, Atein died, and his corpse was destroyed. Is this why he is looking for a different vessel? Was his soul preserved?”

In the final battle, Azell was thorough in destroying Atein’s corpse. He didn’t want to leave open the possibility of Atein coming back as an Undead.

Laura tilted her head.

“You speak as if you’ve seen it.”

“That is none of your business.”

“It doesn’t matter if we have the corpse or not. In truth, we are trying to gather ingredients to create his vessel, but that might not even be necessary.”

“What do you mean?”

“The various magic left behind by him inside the Plain of Darkness is still active. The most astonishing one is the one that’ll carry out the Revival Ritual.”

Laura had seen this magical model once. The Revival Ritual was to take place in the deepest part of the Dragon Demon castle. There was a spring of darkness refined by magic underground, and

the Revival Ritual was ongoing inside this abyss. This process hadn't stopped for the past 220 years.

Yuren asked a question.

“Is it some kind of a Soul Return technique?”

“No, it is something different. It isn't something as crude as that. If it was the Soul Return technique, there's no reason why he would have used up such a vast amount of time.”

The Soul return technique was a type of Black Magic. It used a different method as the Undead spell to bring back the dead. The soul was kept from moving on, and it was put into a different vessel. It could be put into an artificial body, or one could erase a stranger's mind to create a vessel. This was a workaround method for a revival.

However, the probability of success for this method was very slim. The dynamics of magic only allowed a soul to unify with one's own body. This was why most chose to bring a person back as an Undead instead of using the Soul Return technique.

Moreover, even if the method did succeed, the result never turned out right. There wasn't a single case in history where the soul hadn't suffered damage or degradation. This was why even if one was successful in putting a soul into a vessel, a large number of unpredictable problems followed.

Laura spoke.

“The heads of our organization hadn't been trying to prepare the Dragon Demon Princess and the Dragon Demon Prince as a vessel. They weren't trying to pull off something akin to the Soul Return technique.”

“Then why?”

Chapter 111 – To the Land of the Demons (2)

“We just hoped they could be used as ingredients in forming the vessel of the king.”

“...what do you mean?”

“The king’s body is being slowly formed within the abyss. If what Aincera-nim says is true, the king’s body will recover to the one he had when he was alive.”

“He’s going to restore an already destroyed body?”

“His body will return to its previous form. When the restoration of the body ends, an incomprehensible method will be used to put the preserved soul into the body. It’ll be a complete revival.”

Laura had checked, and a significant portion of Atein’s body had already been restored. It was a bizarre sight where the body was floating in the darkness, and there were gaps in the body. However, as time passed, the gaps were being filled in.

“We studied and analyzed his magic for a long time. However, no one was able to discern the true nature of the spell. There were several hypotheses formed, and one of them was about using those with blood ties to the Dragon Demon King as a form of fertilizer. It was hypothesized that sacrificing those with certain strong characteristics would accelerate the recovery process.”

Basically, the Dragon Demon Princess and the Dragon Demon Prince would be carved up for the parts needed for Atein to recover his body.....

It was a ghoulish plan.

Azell and Kairen were taken aback.

“You’ve all lost your minds.”

“I knew your organization was never sound of mind, but I’m speechless. You guys were going to grind up Arrieta and Seigar.

They would have been used as nutrients, so the Dragon Demon King could make his body... You all deserve death.”

Kairen grinded his teeth. His anger was renewed when he learned what they were going to do with his students.

Azell asked a question.

“I’ll ask again. Since this trash of a plan failed...”

“It didn’t fail. However, it did fail in its outcome.”

“Are you trying to play a trick with words?”

“We failed in kidnapping the Dragon Demon Princess and Dragon Demon Prince of the Rulain Kingdom. However, the candidates that could be used for this plan wasn’t limited to the two of them.”

“.....”

Basically, other chosen candidates, who checked off the same characteristics as Arrieta and Seigar, was kidnapped from other places. They were sacrificed to accelerate the revival of Atein. Laura spoke in a dispassionate manner towards the angry people around her.

“However, it was a failure. We couldn’t comprehend the king’s magic, and it was proven that we couldn’t interrupt the process.”

“...that is a stroke of good luck in the midst of misfortune. So how long do we have until Atein revives?”

“I don’t know.”

“.....”

“This is something every follower of the king wants to know. The only thing we can be sure of is the fact that the day is close at hand. The recovery has advanced far enough to assure this.”

“I see. So we have to do something before that happens.”

Azell’s expression darkened.

‘If that bastard really revives to his former self... There is no way

I'll be able to stop him right now.'

At the end of the Dragon Demon War, Azell had to hold out until the outcome of the war was determined. However, he had exceeded expectation by defeating Atein. However, there was no way he would be able to win against Atein right now.

The fact that his overall power level had dropped wasn't the only problem. If he put in time and effort, he was sure he could exceed the power he had in his prime.

However, he could do nothing about the Dragon Demon weapons. Azell could recover his 'Sword that Splits the Heaven, but the other 12 Dragon Demon weapons given to him by his comrades was gone forever. Moreover, he had been able to gather so many in the first place, because it had been the Dragon Demon war. Everything he was able to achieve was through blood and tears.

After thinking it over, Azell shook his head from side to side.

He asked Laura a question.

"I probably should have asked this in the beginning... Why did you surrender to me?"

"That was the only way I would have survived the situation, and I wanted to observe you."

"Weren't you someone important in the Plain of Darkness? Your action was so foolhardy that I can't comprehend it."

"My position is worthless to me. I'm just a tool that's being used to further their ambitions."

Laura spoke with a much colder voice. One could clearly make the distinction with her words from before.

"The king's revival is approaching, and the people, who were close to the king in the past, is impatient."

This was why the Aunsaurus tribe unleashed such madness to

acquire the perfect successor. They wanted to bask in glory next Atein after his revival. This goal drove them nuts.

“I wasn’t born into this world through a normal process. They had wanted the perfect successor, so they created me through magic. I’m a doll they created. Countless siblings of mine were created for this purpose. All of them were killed through this experiment.”

“.....”

Everyone was at a loss for words. The Dragon Demon worshippers were like human nobles. They put a lot of meaning behind bloodline and race. However, they went so far as to commit those acts?

Laura spoke about her past in a calm manner to her audience, who were unable to speak. She told them about how she was born, and what she had to go through to become the heir of Aunsaurus.

Her life story was long. There was no way her life could be described as being humane. Unlike the despairing nature of her situation, she spoke in such a serene manner. Laura gave her confession, and it captivated her audience.

“...I became the heir of Aunsaurus, because I was the last one standing. I was created for this role, yet I never wanted it.”

This was a truth that Laura had never been able to tell others. Her family and close acquaintances didn’t know about how she felt... She would have never imagined in a million years that a time would come when she would be telling her secrets to her enemies. However, she felt unusually relieved.

Laura looked straight at Azell,

“I was born to be the heir of Aunsaurus, and I’ve lived to fulfill that role. I never thought about anything else. I never even thought about being anything else.”

After losing all her siblings, she had become the heir of

Aunsaurus, and she no longer had any aspirations. She had just followed orders to achieve the wishes of her creators. She had merely been a doll following instructions.

However, a strong desire was kindled when she saw Azell. This was a first for her.

She wanted to observe him. She wanted to know more about him.

These desires made Laura throw away all the shackles that had restrained her. She had lived up until now to bring other's wishes to reality. This was the first time she acted from her own desire. This was why she was willing to risk death to see this through.

Laura looked at Azell with determined eyes as she spoke.

"I want to be by your side to see who you are, and what you will be able to accomplish. To achieve this goal, I'm willing to give you Aunsaurus' Dragon Weapon."

3

One didn't need an elaborate ritual to pass on one's Dragon Demon weapon. It was the same when Liglan gave Azell one of his twin swords. When Liglan transferred the weapon, he had to suffer through losing a part of his soul forever.

The process of giving the Vitan's Chalice to Azell was simple and short.

Azell asked her a question.

"Are you ok?"

"...I'm a bit dizzy."

Laura furrowed her brows. It felt as if there was a hole inside her chest. It felt empty. She had lost a presence that had been within her, and the sense of loss was bigger than expected.

Azell spoke.

“A magical vacuum occurred where the Dragon Weapon used to occupy. It’ll become better as time passes.”

He wasn’t surprised at all as he received the Vitan’s Chalice. Laura asked him a question.

“Have you received a Dragon Weapon from someone else before?”

“That’s a secret. However, I am well informed about the process.”

“You never give me a straight answer.”

“You only ask me questions without a straight answer.”

At his words, Laura’s expression slightly changed. It was a very small change, so it was hard to detect. However, if one was observant, one could see she was sulking.

Laura spoke.

“Then I’ll ask you another question. Is your Dragon Weapon perhaps the ‘Sword that Splits the Heaven’ used by Azell Karzark?”

“Do you even need to ask that question? Dragon Weapons are born with an innate name. The name can’t be changed even in an attempt to hide its presence.”

“As expected.....”

She received the answer to her question, yet it didn’t settle the confusion inside her head. Her confusion deepened.

What was the identity of this man?

‘Could a human really live this long?’

The problem was the fact that Azell was human. It didn’t matter what method one used. It was impossible for a human to live this long.

‘I’m pretty sure I heard the descendants of Karzark was completely wiped out....’

If one looked at this realistically, Azell Karzark probably went underground to prepare for the eventual return of the routed forces of the Dragon Demon King. She guessed Azell Karzark passed down his Dragon Weapon through his descendants. However, her heart didn't allow her to believe in those conjectures.

‘Maybe his plans weren't disseminated to us. Did it fail?’

Azell's words were causing confusion within her. It was true that the upper classes of the Plain of Darkness didn't tell the young generation everything. They left out a lot of information. She wondered if the truths she knew were actually lies.

Azell asked her a question.

“So how were you able to inherit the Vitan's Chalice?”

“Huh?”

“Aunsaurus died at the hands of Carlos. However, he didn't die immediately on the battlefield. It was assumed he was able to retreat before he died, and he was able to pass it on his Dragon Weapon to his successor. However... Baldazark was killed, and his body was destroyed. So how was weapon passed on to his successor?”

Azell had killed Baldazark with his own hands. In the battle, Baldazark had used his Dragon Weapon called ‘Bleeding Star’. There had been no chance for Baldazark to transfer his weapon.

‘However, I'm pretty sure his descendant had used the Bleeding Star.’

Even in Laura's case, it was weird. Even if Aunsaurus was able to transfer his Dragon Weapon before death, wasn't the heir before Laura killed by the Guardian Shadows? How did she receive her Dragon Weapon?

Laura spoke.

“The Dragon Weapons of the four Dragon Demon Generals was preserved by the king’s magic. While the magic set up inside the Dragon Demon castle is active, those Dragon Weapons will never be lost even if the owners died.”

“Hmmm.....”

Azell wasn’t surprised. He had an inkling that this would be the answer.

‘Carlos was successful in preserving my Dragon Maken, so of course, Atein could do it.’

Carlos was well qualified to be called an Arch Mage, but in the case of Atein, it was hard to stick that title on him. Atein was a transcendent being, and Arch Mage was an insufficient descriptor. If Carlos could do it, Atein could probably do it also.

“Is this restricted to only the Dragon Weapons of the four Dragon Demon Generals?”

“Yes. No one has been able to replicate the effect of this magic.”

“Therefore, if I die, the Vitan’s Chalice would be returned to the Plain of Darkness?”

“I believe so.”

“What if I transfer it to someone else?”

“It won’t return until the wielder dies.”

“I see. When it becomes ownerless, the item is sent to a set location, and it is stored.”

Azell furrowed his brows. He tried to approach the Vitan’s Chalice, which resided inside him now.

During the Dragon Demon war, he remembered the nightmares caused by the Vitan’s Chalice. Aunsaurus was a mage, and his power even without the Dragon Weapon made him a walking disaster. However, in terms of using the Dragon Weapon, he was superior to Atein.

He never imagined that someday he'll be able use Aunsaurus' Dragon Weapon. This was why they said anything could happen over time. He couldn't even see an inch further into his future, and it was marvelous.

‘I don't see any problem with it.....’

Chapter 112 – To the Land of the Demons (3)

Azell thought about letting Kairen have the Vitan's Chalice. However, if Laura held bad intentions, Kairen wouldn't be able to fight back against her. Kairen had no experience in dealing with the Dragon weapons.

In contrast, Azell already had his Dragon Demon Weapon, and he had a wealth of experience in inheriting Dragon Weapons from others. Even if Laura held evil intentions as she passed on her Vitan's Chalice, Azell was confident that he'll be able to deal with it.

'I don't think she has any wicked intentions, but it isn't something I can be sure about.'

He had put a shunt in Laura's Energy Pulse, so he knew she didn't hold any treacherous intentions. He also knew that the truths she spilled was all true and heartfelt. However, a person's heart was fickle. One could read a certain degree of emotions, but it was impossible to know the entirety of a person's heart. This was why he had to be cautious.

"Still, this is a troublesome item even for me. I'll have to conduct an extensive research. I guess it is understandable since the original owner of this item was a Magician. Moreover, all the descendants were also Magicians. I can see why it is more compatible with Magicians."

After he made sure the Vitan's Chalice settled into his Energy Pulse, Azell spoke.

"However, you weren't able to use it properly."

"...I've never heard such an assessment before."

This was the first time in her life where someone told her she was found wanting. Everyone said she possessed exceptional talent, and they complimented on her use of the Dragon Weapon. In

terms of controlling the Dragon Weapon, she was graded more highly than Kieren, yet she was being criticized by Azell.

Azell spoke.

“Well, I guess it is true that I’ve only seen you use the Vitan’s Chalice using a defensive strategy. The fact that you were able to rescue Niberis using Vitan’s Maze was praiseworthy.”

From what he remembered, Vitan’s Chalice wasn’t terrifying, because of its defensive capability. The true fear came from its attack capability.

On the battlefield, Aunsaurus used Vitan’s Maze to destroy the battle lines of his enemies. Sometimes, he isolated troops in a pocket dimension where he held a decisive edge to overwhelm and slaughter his enemies. He also warped space to redirect a portion of the army. It caused a great confusion when troops were suddenly traveling in different directions.

Imagine, if you will, mounted soldiers charging at full gallop towards their enemies with their lances raised. What would happen if the direction of their charge was flipped? Moreover, what would happen if distance could be contracted? The mounted soldiers would have no choice, but to charge into their allies. This was why Aunsaurus made his enemies shudder in fear. He was someone to be avoided.

“The most terrifying part is the ‘The Goblet that contains the heaven’s tears.’”

It was also the nickname of Aunsaurus. He created a huge distortion in the sky, and the sunlight gathered at a single focal point before being shot. It took a long time to set up this technique, but if it was allowed to be shot, it caused devastation.

Laura was confused as she asked a question.

“You... It seems you know more about the Vitan’s Chalice than me..”

During the Dragon Demon war, Aunsaurus was killed by Carlos. Atein used an extraordinary magic to preserve the Vitan's Chalice with magic, and his heir was able to inherit it. However, Aunsaurus hadn't been able to teach his techniques to his heir. The descendants had to research about Aunsaurus through records. This was especially true for Laura, since her predecessor was killed by the Guardian Shadows. His research had not been passed down to her, so Laura was at an acute disadvantage.

When he heard her explanation, Azell nodded his head.

"I see. I can see why you were deficient in terms of techniques."

These techniques go through trial and error before the correct permutation was found. It would be quickly taught to the heir, so the next generation could research and further develop the technique. However, this had not happened. Of course, Laura would be way behind in how she handled the Vitan's Chalice compared to Aunsaurus.

Azell spoke.

"I'll have to slowly research about the Vitan's Chalice.... Hmm, Yuren and Leticia. I have a question for both of you."

"It seems you like asking questions to others as a hobby, while not answering other people's questions."

Leticia spoke in a sarcastic manner. Azell grinned as he let the comment pass over him.

"If you think it is unfair, you should take the initiative in the conversation."

"You are a shameless man."

"I've heard that a lot before. I know Yuren's situation, so let's put that aside. Why are you fighting against the Dragon Demon King worshippers?"

"I started fighting them around seven years ago."

“You’ve been fight them for quite a while, yet you aren’t a Guardian Shadow?”

“No. Now that you brought it up, are you a member of the Guardian Shadows?”

“I’m not, but this guy is one of them.”

Azell pointed towards Kairen. Leticia looked at Kairen with interest in her eyes.

“I see. Anyways, I’ve faced off against the Guardian Shadows as enemies before. However, I’ve never accepted them as allies.”

“Why is that?”

“I used to be a Dragon Demon King worshipper like Yuren.”

“As I expected”

Azell had on an expression as if he had known this. Leticia asked him a question.

“...did you foresee my answer?”

“I confirmed you used to be a Dragon Demon King worshipper right now. However, there was a commonality between you and Yuren.”

The energy of black magic was deeply ingrained in them. Leticia wasn’t a magician. She used the Dragon Arts, yet she possessed the energy of black magic. It was an uncommon characteristic, so he hypothesized that she used to be a Dragon Demon king worshipper in the past.

Leticia nodded her head.

“You are quite perceptive. It is a bit creepy. Yes, it is as you’ve guessed. In the past, I was made to be a Dragon Demon King worshipper, and I was experimented on through black magic. In the end, the experiments pushed me into betraying them.”

“What kind of tests?”

“I’m not obligated to tell you that.”

“All right. You said you were made. Do you mind if I ask you a little bit more about that?”

“...hmmmm.”

Leticia furrowed her brows as she revealed her displeasure at Azell’s inquisitive questions.

She realized she had made a mistake in speaking so much about herself.

“My story is similar to the one told by the heir of Aunsaurus. In my case, I was from Almarick’s faction.”

The Almarick tribe was like the Aunsaurus tribe. They wanted an outstanding heir, so they chose a method of madness. Leticia had been one of the candidates competing to become the heir. She was disqualified from a test, and she was thrown away to become a testing subject for black magic.

“I believe I’ve told you enough.”

As she spoke, Leticia’s eyes were tumultuous as if she was ready to fight if Azell asked any more questions. Azell no longer asked prying questions.

“I’ve asked you enough about that topic. I’ll ask you a different question.”

“You are still curious about something?”

“I’m curious about a lot of things. Aren’t we both curious about each other?”

“I’m pretty sure you haven’t satisfied my curiosity yet.”

“If you answer this question, I’ll give you a chance to ask me a question.”

“You are very adept at dangling a bait. It really makes me want to beat you to death.”

“Thank you for the compliment. I’m curious about the identity of your master, who taught you the Dragon Arts.”

“Mmmm?”

Leticia’s eyebrows rose. She had never expected this question.

“Why do you want to know that?”

“I’m pretty sure you didn’t learn it from the Dragon Demon King worshippers. Isn’t that right?”

“...you are correct. After I escaped from their grasp, I met my master. I trained under him from two years. How did you know?”

“I saw how you handled the Dragon Arts, and it made me think that I might know your teacher.”

“A person you might know... It might be possible.”

Leticia didn’t look too surprised by his assertion. She spoke.

“My teacher... He is a Dragon Demon named Jisel. I don’t know about his origin nor his age. He used to live in a small village in the eastern portion of this country.”

“He used to... He no longer lives there?”

“After teaching me for 2 years, he left that place. I’m not sure where he is now.”

“Hmm.....”

“Does the name ring a bell?”

“No. I don’t know that name. Moreover... He used to live with humans?”

“Yes.”

“He lived there, while he had his identity as a Dragon Demon out in the open?”

“Yes. In the beginning, the people of the village was reticent, because he was a Dragon Demon of unknown origin. Moreover, he

wasn't a noble. However, he actively helped out in solving troublesome problems around town. He also played with the children... It naturally led them to accept him into the fold."

"It seems I was mistaken.."

Azell had a suspicion. He had thought the man was using a fake identity. However, the only thing similar was the fact that that both were Dragon Demons. Jisel lived amongst the humans. The biggest difference was the fact that Jisel went out of his way to help humans, He even played with human children. He didn't resemble the Dragon Demon he had in mind.

Leticia asked a question.

"Who were you looking for?"

"His name was Reshoo."

Azell briefly thought about his past as he spoke.

"He was the Dragon Demon, who taught me how to wield the Dragon's power."

4

The party camped for the night in the ruined old castle, and they had decided to leave before the sun rose in the morning. Kairen was a bit confused by Azell's decision.

"I thought you would want to stay here a little bit longer."

"I want to do that, but....."

Azell looked at the ruined castle of Karzark, and he let out a bitter laugh.

"If I gave myself up to my memories, it'll be a never ending process. I saw what I came here to see."

He found out everything he wanted to know. When he came back to this land again, he would chase out all the groups associated with the darkness. He'll make this land habitable by humans.

In truth, he wanted to comb over the land. He thought maybe Carlos might have left behind something here.

However, he erased such desires. It wasn't, because Yuren and Laura said this land was being watched by the Plain of Darkness. If Carlos had left something behind, this land wouldn't still be the land of demons. Moreover, the descendants of the County of Karzark wouldn't have been wiped out.

"I've revealed my whereabouts to the enemies, so we can't just sit around here."

"I see."

Azell had been blacklisted by the Plain of Darkness, and they were keeping an eye out for him. On top of that, the traitor Yuren was with him. They had blood in their eyes for Yuren, so, of course, they wouldn't stand by and do nothing.

"Moreover, even if I wanted to search this place, this is the territory of Dragons."

Many Dragons made residence in the County of Karzark. Aside from the several Dragons, who had razed the County of Karzark to the ground, more Dragons had migrated to this location as time passed. So, one was in danger of fighting dragons if one explored this lands.

"However...."

Azell was about to say something, but Azell hesitated. He looked at the gloomy skies with surprised eyes.

Kairen asked in puzzlement.

"What's wrong?"

"Wait a momen....."

Instead of answering, Azell exited the castle. He climbed the walls, and he looked to the eastern sky atop a spire. Then he looked at the western portion of the forest with a mesmerized expression.

Azell mumbled to himself.

“It is still alive.....?”

There was a mountain peak on the other side of the dark forest, and a being was taking flight into the air. The sun hadn't risen yet, so one could only see a silhouette in the dark. It looked like a bird, but Azell knew it wasn't one. No bird this large existed in this world.

“Flying dragon.....!”

As the sun came up, a being that was several times larger than the birds of preys was seen. It was almost impossible to believe such a large creature could fly. It flew over the old ruins of the Karzark Castle. He brought up a scene buried inside his mind.

Near the County of Karzark, there used to be three dragons. One of them used to be a flying dragon. It would fly towards the east to hunt, and when the sun sets, it flew back into the mountain. Azell and the whole County of Karzark started and ended their days watching this sight.¹

For a brief moment, Azell's eyes met the flying dragon's eyes.

The flying dragon was flying several hundred meters up in the air, but both knew that they were looking at each other.

Azell lost the ability to speak as he started at the flying dragon. It was impossible for a human to understand what the dragon was thinking. The flying dragon kept its eyes on Azell as it circled around the Karzark Castle once, then it flew towards the east.

“Ha ha.....”

Azell unconsciously let out a laugh when he saw the flying dragon fly into the distance.

“Ha ha ha ha ha ha.”

Everything he had known had been destroyed, yet... The flying dragon had remained the same. It was a welcome sight. He was so

happy that it felt as if tears would fall from his eyes.

Chapter 113 – To the Land of the Demons (4)

5

No one could comprehend Azell's actions. However, Azell didn't explain himself. The only one, who could question Azell's choices, was Kairen. However, he decided not to ask Azell anything. Many parts of Azell was a mystery to Kairen, but it seemed he had decided to just observe Azell.

Kairen asked a question.

“So... Where do you plan on going next?”

After Azell came to the County of Karzark, he never spoke about his future plans. His head had been filled with the idea of reaching this place.

“I'm not sure. I might.....”

Azell did have a plan in mind. After he woke up in this era, he always thought about what he should do. Two hundred twenty years had passed, and he wanted to find a survivor. He wanted someone, who he could talk to about the old days. He didn't want to find such a being , because he wanted to fill the emptiness caused by his longing. There must be someone out there that could fill in the blank that had been caused by his sleep. Moreover, he needed allies, who were like himself. He needed beings, who would fight alongside him.

Unfortunately, the only survivors he confirmed were his enemies. He even checked with Kairen. No one, who went through the Dragon Demon war, was still alive on his side. He even read official accounts that confirmed the deaths of all the Dragon Demons from that time.

Their deaths couldn't be solely blamed on time. The Dragon Demon King worshippers might have made sure that they didn't survive. Anyways, Azell only had one hope he could cling to.

“I’m going to the Albatan Forest.”

“Mmm? Perhaps... Are you talking about the land of the demons on the east of the continent?”

Kairen asked in surprise.

Land of Demons Albatan Forest.

This was before the fracture of the Nadick Empire. This storied land of the Demons rebuffed any attempt of human invasion. Numerous Dragons took residence in this land a long time ago, and even at the height of the Nadick Empire, they didn’t dare to make this place their territory.

Azell nodded her head.

“Yes.”

“Why are you going to such a faraway location? Moreover, the only information known about that place is the fact that it is dangerous and the place is full of Dragons....”

“I’m going to go meet a Dragon.”

“Mmm?”

Kairen’s eyebrows rose. It wasn’t just him. Everyone looked as if they couldn’t understand Azell’s decision. Laura asked a question.

“If you plan on doing the Dragon Slayer’s ritual, you don’t have to go there. There are plenty of Dragons elsewhere.”

“That isn’t it. Actually, I might as well do the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, since I’m visiting there.”

“...you might as well?”

Laura was dumbfounded. Even in the Plain of Darkness, the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual was only performed by those accomplished in terms of skills and achievements within the organization. It was an honorable tribulation where one had to put one’s life on the line. She knew Azell challenged and won in the Dragon Slayer’s

Ritual. However, she never expected him to speak so lightly of the ritual.

Azell asked her a question.

“How much does the Plain of Darkness know about the Albatan Forest?”

“We don’t have a lot of information about that place. We know there are Dragons there, and there’s a group there, who worship the Dragons.”

“There are those who worships the Dragons? What do you mean?”

The one to pose the questions was Kairen. Laura answered him.

“We don’t know anything definite. However, they were very strong, so we couldn’t be rash in acting against them.”

“So you are basically saying there is another organization aside from the Dragon Demon King worshippers and Guardian Shadows that resides in the shadow of the world? Aren’t there also other secret societies and groups of Black Magicians that aren’t affiliated with you guys?”

“There are a lot of them. However, we do use some of them.”

Azell was astute enough to pick out what Laura had omitted.

“Is this how you guys are able to operate without revealing yourselves as Dragon Demon King worshippers? Or are you guys trying to take advantage of the fact that Guardian Shadows don’t intervene unless the Dragon Demon King Worshippers involves themselves?”

“Yes. Moreover... It is an attempt to obfuscate the eyes of the humans.”

“I see.”

The Dragon Demon king worshippers would have to be eradicated even in human society. The deep wounds had been

created in the Dragon Demon war, and while 200 years had passed, the wounds hadn't healed yet. This was also why the Dragon Demon king worshippers had worked hard to hide their existence even when there weren't in any danger from the Guardian Shadows.

Kairen asked a question.

“What do you mean by you are going to meet a Dragon?”

Kairen was having a trouble comprehend what was going on. Azell was speaking as if he was going to go see an acquaintance. However, the only reason Azell had to seek out a Dragon was to conduct a Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

Azell spoke.

“You already know why Dragons conducts the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.”

“If the Dragon wins, it can gain wisdom from the humans.”

“In the past, a lot of humans and Dragon Majins conducted the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. There were people like me, who were able to take the power of the Dragons, to become much stronger. However, there were also losers, who had to give up their wisdom.”

“What are you trying to say?”

“What if... On this world, what if there were Dragons, who were able to win numerous Dragon Slayer's Ritual? What would have happened to those Dragons, who achieved their ultimate wish?”

“...the Dragon's wish is to gain wisdom. Are you saying a wise Dragon resides in the Albatan Forest?”

Kairen asked the question, and his expression indicated that he was having hard time believing the story.

Azell grinned.

“The ruler of the Albatan Forest is the only Dragon I know, who

had freed itself from the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. This particular Dragon had gained the wisdom it had wanted, so it has no reason to carry out the Dragon Slayer's Ritual."

The name of the Dragon known by Azell was Albatan. It was a Dragon, who had freed itself from its own fate.

6

After leaving the County of Karzark, they immediately headed east. Kairen grumbled.

"We left one land of the Demons to go to another land of the Demons. I feel like an explorer, who seeks out land of the Demons."

"Events somehow turned out like this."

"Are you perhaps going to another land of the Demons after the Albatan Forest?"

"They do sound like attractive destinations to visit. I'll take it into consideration. The continent is large and there are a lot of land of demons."

They bantered with each other as the party started moving at an astonishing speed.

When they were trying to find a suitable place for a lunchbreak, Laura asked a question. She sounded fed up.

"Do you guys always travel at this speed?"

"Before you guys joined us, we traveled much faster."

The party had been traveling for four hours, and they were traveling in a straight line at 60 km/h. It didn't matter what the terrain was like. They were traveling at a surprising speed, but while they were coming to the County of Karzark, Azell and Kairen had traveled at 300 km/h. Basically, they were travelling at a very leisurely speed right now.

Yuren looked as if he couldn't believe that statement.

“...you traveled faster than this? That sounds preposterous.”

Yuren was a magician, so he was able to use Flight magic. He wasn't affected too much by the terrain. It wasn't as if the terrain had no effect on him. If one flew higher, one needed more skill, and the magical energy was consumed at a faster rate.

He had been flying over mountains, lakes, forests and plains for the past four hours. They were traveling in a straight line to their destination at 60 km/h. It was pushing Yuren to his limit. His magical reserve was being squeezed dry, and it made him wonder if he was better off running on the ground. He was so tired that he didn't think he could travel any more.

However, they were actually travelling at a slow pace?

Kairen spoke in a nonchalant manner.

“We are just matching your speed. Do you realize how far the Albatan Forest is?”

“...are you perhaps thinking about running all the way towards the Albatan Forest? You are going to run from the midwest of the continent to the eastern portion of the continent?”

“What other method is there? If you are suggesting we ride horses, it is a nonstarter. Horses are too slow.”

“.....”

“If you can't even keep up with this pace, we can go our separate ways. I'll just drag Laura along.”

Laura was having a much easier time keeping up with them compared to Yuren. Azell still had a shunt in her energy pulse, but he allowed her to use her magical energy. He could monitor her in real time, so he could seal her magical energy at any time.

Laura spoke when she heard Kairen's words.

“I've seen files that said the Dragon Sword Duke transcends common sense... You are amazing.”

“Does the Plain of Darkness really view me like that? What else do they say about me?”

“You are known as someone, who hasn’t learned the forgotten secret techniques. However, you were known as someone with abundant power, so if possible, we were instructed to avoid you.”

Before he met Azell, Kairen hadn’t been able to learn any secret techniques. However, he was someone that was still feared by the Dragon Demon King worshippers. He may be a blank slate in terms of skills learned, but he had developed his powerful Dragon Demon magic to the extremes. Moreover, he had been able to make the Dragon Sword through his own research. He was able to reach a frightening level by combining his technical sense of manipulating the Dragon Demon magic and his fearsome battle capabilities.

Kairen grinned.

“I see. It is an old assessment of me, but I’ll take it as a compliment.”

After meeting Azell, Kairen now knew secret techniques. His overall fighting power was much higher than before.

Even Azell remarked in admiration at how fast Kairen was able to learn techniques. He had been a master for over 100 years, but he was able to absorb Azell’s teaching as if he was a young man in his growth phase. He was growing at a very rapid pace.

Laura spoke.

“Our agents couldn’t track you, so we thought you had some kind of high speed transportation device. However, you were moving in such a primitive way....”

The Guardian Shadows were a big mystery to those in the Plain of Darkness. Therefore, whenever they didn’t understand something about the Guardian Shadows, they assumed that the Guardian Shadows were using some special method. When it looked as if Kairen was using some kind of abnormal travel ability

to move around the continent, they were suspicious as to whether the Guardian Shadows had a mode of transportation similar to the ‘Road of Emptiness’.

Kairen asked in puzzlement.

“...Road of Emptiness?”

“It is a legacy left behind the king.”

Laura described the Road of Emptiness. Kairen was astonished.

“You are able to jump space to get to various locations on the continent. Such ridiculous magical device exists? So this the reason why you guys are so elusive.”

“Is it nearby?”

Azell, who had been listening silently, suddenly intruded into the conversation.

Laura tilted her head in puzzlement.

“I’ll have to look at a map. Why?”

“We’ll have to modify our course. While we are heading towards the Albatan Forest, we’ll attack as many waystations connected to the ‘Road of Emptiness.’”

“.....”

At those words, Laura’s eyes turned round. She never expected him to attack these locations as soon as he heard about it.

Laura spoke.

“It would be pointless in eliminating all the troops guarding the Road of Emptiness. It can’t be used by outsiders.”

“That is unfortunate. However, I think it’ll be worth it to just destroy it.”

“You should refrain from doing so.”

Yuren butted in. When Azell looked at him, he spoke.

“The Road of Emptiness is a legacy that is controlled through the Great Darkness residing with Queen Aincera. The mere act of approaching it would alert Aincera of your existence. This is the reason why Leticia and I never attacked the few waystations we were aware of.”

“Mmm...”

Azell furrowed his brows. If it is as Yuren described, he had to weigh the benefit of suppressing the enemy’s transcendent mobility against exposing his location to his enemies.

In the end, which would be more beneficial?

‘I have to think this through.’

The threat level of the Road of Emptiness was too high to leave it alone. The fact that they could exchange information in real-time was a overwhelming advantage. Moreover, it also allowed the transport of people... This device did not exist in the era of the Dragon Demon war.

‘Mmm? Wait a moment.’

It meant Atein had finished creating this legacy before he died. So why hadn’t he used this in the Dragon Demon war?

When he asked about this point, Laura answered.

“Only a limited number of people can travel through it.”

The Road of Emptiness had limited fixed destinations it can travel to, and it was impossible to move a large number of troops through it. This was why they formed attack organizations across the continent. The officers were the only ones that would be able to use the Road of Emptiness.

Azell accepted the explanation.

“I see. I’m glad there are such limitations to the device. It wasn’t probably known during the Dragon Demon war, but they probably used it to transport small amount of troops.

“What should we do?”

At Kairen’s question, Azell thought about it for a bit before he made a decision.

“We’ll give up on my idea. If we could use it, it’ll be worth attacking the waystations even if we overextend ourselves. Since we can’t use it, it would be better for us to operate under the radar for a while.”

“It would be great if we can alert the Guardian Shadows to attack the waystation in my kingdom....”

“That I can agree with. Is that possible?”

“...mmm. In truth, it might be impossible to arrange it right now.”

They had already crossed two borders, so it would be difficult to get a message to the Rulain Kingdom. They could enlist the Guardian Shadows, but it was uncertain if they would deliver the message.

Azell felt regret at the missed opportunity.

“That is too bad. If we could use it, we could immediately infiltrate the Plain of Darkness....”

Larua was surprised by his words.

“Even you will get killed trying to pull that off.”

“I guess so.”

Azell passively accepted her assessment. The core forces of the Dragon Demon King worshippers were all gathered at the Plain of Darkness. It wouldn’t be easy to take all of them down.

“Still, we have to do something. We have to stop the Revival Ritual before Atein is able to revive.”

“.....”

“Why are you looking at me like that?”

“I’m really curious as to who you really are.”

“You can continue to be curious until you figure out the answer.”

“Meanie.”

Laura’s lips made a small pout.

Chapter 114 – To the Land of the Demons (5)

7

<I was awakened after a very long time, so I went out to enjoy a fight. Yet it seems the really interesting news was actually waiting for my return. Is it true that the heir of Aunsaurus betrayed us?>

The amused Reygus asked the question. He had died once to become an Undead, but he had not fallen into depression like the other Undeads. Instead of despairing, he remained cheerful. It made one wonder what his personality was like when he was alive.

He was one of the four Dragon Demon Generals, and there weren't many figures he admired in this world. The Dragon Demon King's first wife Aincera was one of the the rare ones to hold his esteem.

“That is right.”

<How did that come about?>

“I have no idea. In the first place, I could never tell what that child was thinking inside. Maybe, the Aunsaurus tribe is at fault for improperly educating her.”

<Hmm. I shouldn't bother you by pressing for more details. I'll ask my subordinate about it.>

“You are unchanged.”

<I'll accept that as a compliment. I was resurrected from death, yet I remain unchanged. Isn't it splendid?>

Reygus barked out a laugh.

When he was alive, Reygus was very informal with his subordinates. He joined the rank and file to drink alcohol, and in recent days, he enjoyed gossiping and playing around with the servants. In the past, Aincera had been very overt in showing her displeasure with his overall attitude.

However, her attitude was completely different now. She had told him he had remained unchanged. However, her voice and expression remained indifferent. She didn't show any emotions.

Reygus spoke.

<I think the Queen has changed a lot.>

“A lot of time has passed.”

<I don't think that's the only reason.>

“This is a tribulation I must endure.”

Aincera knew very well what she had lost. However, she didn't have any emotions left to recoil at her change. Her soul was nothing but a thick husk. She only wanted to achieve her heart's wish. She prioritized her task above all else...

<.....>

Reygus just looked at her. He was an Undead, so at a time like this, he was able to hide all emotions. It was an unpleasant sight, but Aincera just accept his scrutiny. She was like an unfeeling doll.

In the end, Aincera asked a question.

“What result were you able to achieve through the fight?”

<Hmm. The fight was very good. It was beyond expectation. As expected, the king's magic is incredible. I thought it was an absolute travesty when I realized I was an Undead. However, since I've woken up, I'm liking this body more and more. It is a bit troubling.>

“That's fortunate. Your existence has already been revealed to the Guardian Shadows, so I'm not going to be conservative in how I use you. I expect your active participation from now on.”

<If I can run amok, I'll welcome it. This is why I spurned the courtship of the netherworld to come back here.>

“You'll have plenty of opportunity to do so. Also... Did you find

out anything about Carlos?”

<Unfortunately, I couldn't force those bastards to speak. We'll have to wait for the trackers to bring back some useful information.>

Reygus had put down a trap for the Keepers of the Prophecy. He had done it to find out more about Carlos. However, Delta and Zeta got in his way until the end, and they didn't divulge any information.

Aincera spoke.

“However... I'm skeptical. I don't think the sinner Carlos is still alive. In all these years, the Great Darkness was never able find his trace.”

<I don't know if he is alive. However, I'm sure he exists somewhere in the world. In my opinion, the Guardian Shadows are a strong candidate.>

“You are saying he might have become an Undead.”

<Yes. My opinion was reinforced after I met the Guardian Shadows. They were almost a complete product just like me. Moreover.....>

“Is something bothering you?”

Reygus stopped speaking for a brief moment as he fell into his thoughts. Aincera queried him. Reygus organized the thoughts floating around inside his head before he spoke.

<Hmm. It is nothing. I'll speak to you about it once I get a firmer grip on this idea. Anyways, it is my opinion that the magicians, who are able to pull this off, is uncommon. This is true even if one considered the magicians across the ages.>

From the moment Reygus was awakened, he just knew Carlos was alive somewhere in this world. Atein's magic was like a divine revelation, and this truth was delivered to Reygus.

When this information was disseminated, the Plains of Darkness was turned upside down. At the same time, they devoted all their efforts into finding any trace left behind by Carlos.

<I'll see myself out.>

Reygus did a courtly bow, and the gesture did not look right on his bulky body. Afterwards, he left Aincera.

When Reygus exited the Queen's room, Reygus saw an old Dragon Demon with gray horns waiting for him. The old Dragon Demon approached him, and the old Dragon Demon gave back the massive battle hammer to him. Reygus hadn't been able to take his weapon into the meeting with the Queen, so he had left it behind.

<The Queen has sacrificed a lot of herself.>

"We exist now, because of her sacrifice."

The old Dragon Demon named Chanes had a cold expression on his face. He was Reygus' lieutenant during the Dragon Demon war. Now he was one of the influential being that ruled over the Plain of Darkness. However, when Reygus awoke as an Undead, Chanes insisted on assisting Reygus.

Suddenly, Chanes spoke.

"I never expected all of this to take this long."

<I agree. When I heard that it was 223 years since the king's death, I thought it was a joke. It took so long to raise an Undead like me. I guess it means the capabilities of this body should be excellent. Still, I'm not sure what to think about all of this.>

Reygus had awakened as an Undead in recent days. He was brought back through the magic of the Dragon Demon king, so he was a very special Undead. He was an Undead, yet his memories and his thought process remained crystal clear. He wasn't swept up by the madness. Even his five senses remained.

Reygus was dead, yet it almost felt as if he was still alive. The fact

that he was having a difficult time differentiating between the two state was confusing, yet he liked having such a dilemma..

Now that he was awake, the Plain of Darkness took it as a sign that the king's revival was near. It seemed he was tied to the Ritual of Revival that was ongoing in the basement of the Dragon Demon Palace.

Chanes spoke..

“By the look of you, I think it was well worth the time.”

<If one looked only at my battle capabilities, it definitely was worth the time.>

While he was giving his reply, a question popped up inside Reygus' mind.

‘Those bastards were very similar to me.’

This was the fact that he had refrained from telling Aincera. The Guardian Shadow's Undeads felt somehow very similar to him.

‘Are those bastards related to the king's magic? Well, the king was very lax about protecting his magic. There's a chance that someone might have developed a similar magic using the remnants of spells left behind by him... If not, did Carlos really become involved in their creation?’

After thinking about it for a brief moment, Reygus opened his mouth.

<You look really old now.>

“A lot of time has passed.”

Two hundred twenty three years wasn't a short amount of time even for Dragon Demon.

At the time of the Dragon Demon wars, Chanes was a young man. Now he was a white haired old man. It really drove home the fact that a lot of time had passed. In truth, Reygus was very surprised that Chanes was still alive. Chanes wasn't a 1st generation Dragon

Demon, yet he had lived well past 400 years.

<You should be letting the young ones do all the work, while you play around. Why did you come running to me? You should have sent your decent subordinates to me.>

“I’ve raised several promising ones. I’ll introduce them to you soon.”

<As expected, you probably don’t want to do all the odd jobs at your old age.>

“Isn’t it to be expected? I’ve advanced enough in my station where I’m able to put my nose in the air.”

<You are still the same. Such a long time had passed, yet you are the same. I like it.>

Reygus was elated, so he tried to hum. However, the sound of air leaking out was heard, and a dark energy of the Curse was dispersed. He couldn’t make the sound he wanted to make. Naturally, he tried to click his tongue in dismay, but he didn’t have a tongue. It was impossible.

<This body is a masterpiece. It is a masterpiece, yet I have a long way to go before I accept it as my own body. It isn’t a hindrance in battle, but I’m not satisfied with that.>

The Skeleton cackled as his shoulders shook.

<I want to eat meat dripping with blood. I’m sad, because it is a dream that is forever out of my reach. Well, it’s all right. I’m sure there are other edibles that are considered to be delicacies for the Undead. Maybe, I’ll go look for that.>

“If you want something, I’ll help you acquire it.”

<I’m just saying anything that crosses my mind. Hmm. You still haven’t answered my question.>

“I have two reasons. One is an official reason, and the other one is a personal reason.”

<Tell me the official reason first.>

“While you were gone, I’ve advanced enough in my station where I’m now in charge of leading a faction. It isn’t something too impressive. It pales in comparison to your achievements. However, now that everyone is saying the king’s revival is drawing near, I have a chance to secure a foothold with you.”

<I’m just a walking corpse now. What benefit will you gain by sticking by me?>

“I don’t really have anyone else I can curry favor with.”

<I see. All right. So what is the personal reason?>

“My life isn’t fun anymore.”

<Mmm?>

“I usually hide here with a devious smile on my face. I just plot against the humans, and I find such work to be boring. If I’m with the general, this old man will have a chance to jump into a fight where my blood will boil.”

<That is very... You aren’t really acting your age.>

“Now that I think about it, I remember the common criticism against you was the fact that you didn’t act your age....”

<Ha. Now that you’ve aged a little bit, you are trying to act cheeky towards me. I’m already dead, so who care what my age is? After Balun’s death, no Undead counts their age.>

“Balun?”

<Mmm? Ah. I guess kids from these days won’t know about him.>

“...I’m not of the younger generation, yet I do not know about him.”

<You would have known his name if you’ve lived 400 years longer. This was in the distant past, and the bastard had numerous

bouts with the king.>

“He fought against the king? That is news to me.”

<Well, there are countless beings that were killed by the king. Currently, the name Atein is officially entered into the public records as someone against the world. However, at one time, he was considered to be a hero, who had saved the world. These kinds of events happened quite often throughout history.>

Reygus went over the past events. Before he was killed, he had lived a very long time. He was basically a walking history book. He was born to no parents, so he was a 1st Generation Dragon Demon. He had transcended mortality to live a very long life.

<At that time, I wasn't serving the king as a Dragon Demon General... Yes. I was a companion of the wise, yet whimsical magician named Atein.>

Chanes' ears perked up. He was of an age where he told the younger generation about the old stories. However, at that moment, he felt as if he was thrown back to his childhood. He had listened to the stories from the adults with a twinkle in his eyes.

<The King, Almarick and I got together to carry out this task. Truthfully, I didn't have a great relationship with Almarick during that time... Hmmm. I'll skip that part of the story. At the time, we weren't even acquainted with Aunsaurus and Baldazark yet.. Anyways, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Balun was the worst foe we've ever encountered.>

“He was that powerful? He must have been one of the 1st Generation Dragon Demon.”

<No. He was a human. To be precise, he used to be a human.>

“A human? A human was a threat to the three of you?”

<You sound skeptical. You should keep in mind that we lost to a human in the Dragon Demon War.>

“That is true.....”

<Well, Balun wasn't a living human being. The king designated him as being 'The First to Deny Death'. He was also called the 'Originator of the Black Magicians'.....>

Balun was a being, who had lived for a very long time. Countless beings lived on the surface of the world, yet he was the first to deny death. He had raised himself as an Undead.

<Basically, Undeads didn't exist before Balun. According to our king's words, most of the Necromancy skills that exist right now was cultivated by Balun.>

“My god. Such a being existed in this world?”

<He existed. There is a first for everything. Balun was as unique as the first king anointed by the Dragon Demons.>

At the time, Balun wanted to change the world. He theorized that the pain one received over the course of one's life happened, because one was alive. This was why he wanted all the beings on this world to transcend life and death... In some aspects, he was a bigger calamity to the world than Atein. However, in the end, Atein and his companions was able to take him down.

After he finished his story, Reygus suddenly remembered something.

<Come to think of it, I heard some of our kids were betrayed. What happened?>

“The surviving members of each tribe devoted their efforts into developing the future generation. This resulted in the current young generation being quite skilled even though they are inexperienced. However, it seemed the mental aspect of their education was deficient..”

<I don't want to hear about the boring details.>

“Would you like to hear about the child who betrayed us first? Or

would you like to hear about the children, who were beaten to a pulp?”

<Tell me about the one that betrayed us. How inhospitable were we to her that a child of that station abandoned everything? Why would she run away?>

“Mmm. In truth, she wasn’t treated well. This is especially true for the Aunsaurus tribe. They are out of control....”

<In what way?>

“I don’t know the full story. This was all gathered through rumors.”

Chanes was a survivor of the Dragon Demon war, so he was one of the heavyweights that ruled over the Plain of Darkness. However, during the Dragon Demon war, he had merely been a lieutenant serving under Reygus. This was why he had less power than the survivors with blood ties to Aunsaurus and Baldazark. This was why he could only rely on information gathered from spies and rumors to discern what was going on in the different factions. The Great Darkness within Aincera united the Plain of Darkness under the same banner, but factions within the Plain of Darkness weren’t unified.

“The Aunsaurus tribe conducted countless tests and rituals to be able to artificially create a perfect heir. It is rumored that the betrayer Laura Aunsaurus was the product of their efforts.”

<Mmm? They did something that insane?>

Reygus was surprised. Regyus was one of the main principles, who helped Atein, light the world on fire through war. However, even he was taken aback by Chanes’ story.

“If it is true, it was stupid of them. The child was made using their blood. Basically, they put forth a doll made through magic as the heir of Aunsaurus.”

<Hmmm.....>

Reygus expressed a really complicated, yet subtle feeling. The beings, whom he had fought with against the world, were showing signs of madness. It really hammered home the fact that a lot of years had passed.

<In regards to that story, I'll hear the details later. What about the kids, who were beaten up?>

“They.....”

After a short amount of time, Reygus heard the full story from Chanes. The light within the eye sockets couldn't hide the surprise and interest he felt.

Chapter 115 – Guide's Gift (1)

1

Every night Yuren Rizester went to sleep he always had a dream. The guide in his dream had approached him one day, and now he always had a dream every night. Now he couldn't remember a time when he didn't have a dream.

-In the end, you met your destiny, Yuren.

At a glance, Yuren could tell he wasn't in reality. He could see numerous fragments of memories connected to each other, and the guide's words came to Yuren in this chaotic space. The guide's voice allowed Yuren to be able to think clearly, and a sense of calmness was promoted from within.

The dream of the guide was different from a lucid dream. However, his consciousness wasn't fully awake. He couldn't remember all that went on within his dreams.

It was similar to a half-asleep state. He was asleep, but he was conscious of what was happening around him in reality. It felt as if someone was whispering into his ears.

'Ah. It was as you said... The man makes me think of Azell Karzark from the legends.'

-Right?

'The heir of Aunsaurus suspects that Azell Karzark is the original Azell.... Well, that isn't possible, but he does make one think it is a possibility.'

It had only been several day since Yuren had met Azell. However, Azell became more remarkable as Yuren continued to look at him. It was as the guide had said. Yuren thought Azell really might be able to open up a path that will allow them to bring down the Dragon Demon king worshippers...

-He will show you the answer. I only tell you what you have to do, but he will be the one to lead your destiny.

‘If he is the descendant of Azell Karzark... Our meeting seems very fateful.’

After 220 years, the descendants of the hero Azell Karzark and Archmage Carlos Rizester had met. If the two of them allied with each other to eradicate the evil left behind by the Dragon Demon King Atein, how poetic would it be?

The guide spoke.

-It is destiny. Your relationship with him has to proceed forward, so you have to be on his good side. The road will open when you gain his trust.

‘I’ll work on it. This is why I am here.’

Yuren was having a nightmare even though he wasn’t asleep. If he spaced out for a brief moment, nightmare-like thoughts plagued him. There were people out there, who were deprived of their lives like Yuren. The Dragon Demon king worshippers turned people into tools, and the fact that they were suffering even now was horrifying to Yuren. Then there were the children he had tried to rescue. In the end, they had all died, and he could still hear their screams. He had driven them towards their deaths.

-You did your best.

‘However, the result was the worst.’

-Yuren.

‘I know. It is useless to blame myself. Leticia already nags me about it so much that I’m fed up with the topic.’

Yuren shook his head from side to side. He had a sad smile on his face.

‘I have to help him to end all of this. Even if I die, it is my duty.’

He had walked through the long darkness to find a person, who

might become the light of hope. Yuren had to earn Azell's trust at all cost. He had to become Azell's companion.

The guide's voice remained silent for a brief moment before it spoke again.

-All right. I'll give you knowledge that'll allow you to gain his trust.

'Is there anything else I can do except fight by his side?'

-Of course. Time is precious right now. At this moment, the world is going through a sudden change. There is too little time left to build trust and camaraderie through human interactions.

'What is happening?'

-You already have the answer.

'Is it the Dragon Demon King Atein's revival?'

When Yuren asked the question, he felt a peculiar reverberation. Dragon Demon King Atein.

He said this name countless times before, but he now suddenly felt a weird sensation.

Before he became preoccupied with this point, the guide continued to speak.

-That isn't the problem.

'Then what is it?'

-This will cause the Plain of Darkness to move in earnest.

'I'm not sure what you are trying to say.'

-Think this through Yuren. You have to come up with the answer for yourself. You can't just expect me to feed you all the information. If not, you'll just become my puppet.

'This is why I'm conflicted. If you were a Demon trying to destroy me, you wouldn't say stuff like this to me.'

-Maybe, this is all part of my design.

‘Ah, all right. Good.’

Yuren compiled the information available to him, and he came up with several possibilities. The Plain of Darkness had countless schemes ongoing on the continent. In the past 200 years, there had been several changes of generations. Each change of generation provided an opportunity for the Dragon Demon king worshippers to worm their way into the human society.

‘They haven’t revealed themselves. They might after Atein’s revival, but they don’t have the power to pick a fight with the world..’

The Plain of Darkness hid in the shadow of the world as they schemed. They did this, because they didn’t possess the power they once possessed in the Dragon Demon war. In the past, they had enough forces to take over the world. Of course, if they concentrated their forces now, they would be able to fight and win against a single country. However, their existence would be revealed to the seven kingdoms in the process. No, the whole world would become their enemy, and only ruination awaited the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

‘If that is true... The only thing I can think of is the fact that they want to sow chaos from the shadows.’

-That is what they’ve been doing up until now. What has changed?

‘Hmm. I’m not sure. Their goal was to make human society diseased... Will they instigate a war between humans?’

-That is one of the right answers.

‘Really? Well, I guess that is within their capability.’

It would be crazy for the Plain of Darkness to reveal themselves and go to war with the humans. However, they had infiltrated all the ranks and classes of society, so it was possible to engineer a

war.

‘However, that isn’t all there is to the plan?’

-No. The fact that a war will start soon is correct. War is the most violent way to exhaust the power of humans.

‘It isn’t just about a fight between humans. There are other beings aside from humans.... So they’ll try to bring beings from other races, who aren’t affiliated with the Dragon Demon king worshippers, into a fight with the humans?’

-That is also another correct answer. They’ve been conducting numerous experiments.

‘For example, are you talking about the Grand Alliance of Darkness that popped up in the Rulain Kingdom?’

-Yes.

The Grand Alliance of Darkness had threatened the Rulain Kingdom around 30 years ago, and they had been created by the Plain of Darkness. The strong and wise mutant Orc named Dakan had been made with evil magic. It had been surprisingly easy to gather monsters by propping Dakan up as a leader.

-The winds of change will blow over the world. Be prepared for the ensuing chaos.

The guide had told Yuren a surprising amount of information. If the guide’s words were correct, he could buy Azell’s trust with it. The guide’s words had never been wrong before.

Suddenly, Yuren asked a question.

‘I never expected such an arrangement to exist. It is amazing. Anyways... Isn’t it time for you to tell me who you are?’

-It would be meaningless to tell you.

‘Why?’

-You’ll forget it once this dream ends. The answer will come to

you at the right time.

‘But.....’

The dream ended there.

2

Azell’s party was moving at a much slower pace than they had originally planned. A week had passed, since they had left the County of Karzark. Currently, they had decided to rest at an inn. Kairen grumbled.

“We should have already covered twice the distance by now. That magician move like a snail....”

“...are you trying to kill me? If so, you should just tell it to me straight.”

Yuren grumbled. If one was looking at a map, they were traveling in a straight line at 60 km/h. They were traveling at an incredibly high speed. It defied common sense.

If a layman saw Yuren fly, one wouldn’t understand how difficult it was to fly through the air. Flight over a long period of time required the extreme consumption of magical energy, stamina and willpower. It was very remarkable that a young man like Yuren was able to keep up with the pace.

In terms of innate magical energy, Laura was more outstanding than Yuren, yet even she was exhausted. Leticia, who trained in the Dragon Arts, was keeping up, but it hadn’t been easy for her.

‘However, I can’t deny this is good training for me.’

Normally, regular magicians never thought about using Flight magic to travel a long distance at high speeds. The reasons were as previously stated. Those reason also applied to Laura.

She was demanded to do tasks that she had never been required to do before. She could feel herself improve. On the first day, she had been completely gassed. She needed to be carried by Azell to

the next town. However, she was now reach their next destination under her own power.

‘This will be most effective when I have to run away.’

Leticia had to expend quite a lot of energy when she had to run away from Dragon Demon king worshippers in the past. However, she never overdid it, because she had to preserve her battle capability. However, if she was put in a similar situation, she would now have an easier time evading her trackers.

Leticia made a remark to Azell.

“I never knew the human body could move so well.”

Even if he was a Spirit Order Practitioner, the way he moved was absurd. Azell was equipped lightly, but he carried all the baggages needed for the trip. He ran across mountain and forests, while carrying such a burden.

Kairen smirked at her words.

“If my friend wanted to, he could travel much faster than me. In truth, I’m slowing him down. If I’m grabbing at his ankles, you guys are like balls and chain on his feet.”

“Mmm? What are you saying?”

“You’ll have a chance to see it later. Even I don’t dare to imitate what he does.”

Azell was able to teach Kairen a lot of techniques. However, Kairen wasn’t able to learn ‘Incarnation’, which allowed one to create a clone of substance. In the first place, it was a skill incompatible with him. Kairen had rarely used the cloning technique before. This was why Kairen couldn’t learn the long range flight technique devised by Azell.

Kairen spoke.

“You are doing pretty well in keeping up with us, Leticia.”

“I’ve always preferred to run on my own to feet. However, I’ve

never experience traveling long distances day after day like this. It is hard for me to see you guys as being sane.”

Leticia shook her head from side to side. Kairen looked at her with interest. He didn't know what the Dragon Demon King worshippers did to her,. However, she possessed more Dragon Demon magic as a Dragon Majin compared to most Dragon Demons. She was the most talented female practitioner of the Dragon Arts he had seen in his lifetime.

“If you are overflowing with energy, why don't we spar? Azell doesn't play with me anymore, so I'm a little bit bored.”

“You are old, yet.... You are overflowing with energy.”

Even as she said those words, Leticia looked interested. It would be a lie to say she hadn't wanted to fight him during the week long travel.

Yuren spoke as he saw the two of them exit towards the backyard of the inn.

“Ah, youth.”

“You are the youngest amongst us.”

Laura, who was lounging around, spoke.

Chapter 116 – Guide's Gift (2)

3

After Azell left the County of Karzark, he hadn't sparred with Kairen. The reasons were simple. He had to constantly monitor the magical energy shunt that he had placed inside Laura. Then there was the need for him to deal with the Dragon weapon, Vitan's Chalice.

'As expected, an item infused with magic is troublesome for me.'

The distortion of space wasn't the only function possessed by Vitan's Chalice. Variety of magical spells were infused into this Dragon weapon. All Dragon weapons from magicians were like this. Niberis possessed the Book of Darkness, and it also was infused with magical spells. When one inherited a Dragon weapon from a magician, a magical spell one wasn't skilled enough to use through one's own skills could be used if it was infused into the Dragon weapon.

However, Azell wasn't a magician. It would have been great if he could use it by providing the magical energy. This particular Dragon Weapon wouldn't activate automatically. The magic spells infused into the Vitan's chalice were linked using a high level method. All these magical spells were easy to use only if one was able to use this link.

"This really is a tool for a magician. It is incompatible with me."

Azell grumbled to himself. Laura, who was observing him from the opposite side, was dumbfounded by his words.

"It has only been several days, yet you've already master the Vitan's Maze."

"If it has nothing to do with magic, it isn't a problem for me."

Azell was learning the functions of the Vitan's Chalice at a surprisingly rapid pace. He had already learned the Vitan's Maze,

and he was successful in partially forming the ‘The Goblet containing the heaven’s tears’.

However, he couldn’t use any of the magic infused into the item. This was why he couldn’t even operate it at half its capacity.

“So are you experienced in dealing with a variety of Dragon Weapons?”

“Are you interrogating me?”

“If you are really the Azell Karzark, I might be.”

Laura had those intentions, so she didn’t deny it. Azell spoke.

“Have fun speculating.”

“.....”

Laura had a sulky look as she closed her mouth. Azell smirked as he looked at her.

‘Anyways, this girl... Does she really have no ill-intentions towards us?’

If one inherited a Dragon weapon from a wielder, who had ill intent, it was basically like keeping a bomb inside one’s body. This was why Azell was constantly monitoring the Vitan’s Chalice to see if any changes took place. If he was hit in the back of the head, while his guard was down, it would be the end of him.

However, a week had passed, and there was no signs of trouble. In the case of the Vitan’s Chalice, the item did seem discontent at being owned by Azell, but it didn’t show any signs of putting up a fight or cause him harm.

‘Hmm.....’

The Dragon weapons all possessed a sense of self. This was why the Vitan’s Chalice knew about Azell’s existence, and it did harbor a feeling of hesitancy towards him. Every time he perceived the Vitan’s Chalice, its feelings were sent towards him.

However, at the same time, Dragon Weapons were tools. Once the proper process of being transferred to a new owner occurred, the Dragon weapon became subservient. The feelings about the past was less important. The new owner was the most important being to the Dragon weapon.

Azell suddenly spoke.

“This might be a bit abrupt, but... Your disguise is flawless.”

Laura looked like a human woman right now. Instead of wearing a dress that made her look like a daughter of a noble, she wore a simple traveler’s clothes. Moreover, she had hidden all the special characteristics of a Dragon Demon. Her appearance was eye catching, but in the end, she looked like a human. Azell’s eyes could see through the illusion, so he could see her real self. However, there was something he couldn’t detect.

“What method are you using to hide your Dragon Demon magic?”

Even Laura’s Dragon Demon magic was completely hidden, and even a person with highly developed senses would see her as a human magician. Laura answered him.

“I used magic.”

“Was it a spell developed within the Plain of Darkness?”

“Yes.”

“I see. You guys have to hide within human society, so I’m guessing the disguise has to be airtight. The fact that you guys were able to develop a spell that;s so easy to learn is impressive.”

“What do you mean?”

“All the Dragon Demon king worshippers seems to be using that particular spell. Ah, I guess the only ones, who have to hide their Dragon Demon magic, are the top-tier troops. Maybe, it is a difficult spell to use.”

“It is very difficult.”

“Huh?”

“It is a very difficult magic for the rank and file to use.”

Azell shook his head in disbelief as he asked the question.

“Let me stop you right there... How difficult is it? For example, could a member of the Dragon’s Shadow pull it off?”

“Dragon’s Shadow? Which Dragon’s Shadow are you talking about?”

Laura tilted her head in confusion. Azell furrowed his brows.

“There are more than one organizations like the Dragon’s Shadow?”

“At the very least, each country has one. It is unusual to see more than two in a country. The organizations on the bottom all have similar names.”

“...basically, one or two of the lower organizations could gather enough high quality fighters to contend with a fighter like the Dragon Demon Princess? Are you sure these are the lower end organizations?”

“These are the organizations at the bottom of the totem pole. Didn’t Yuren Rizester tell you about them?”

“What are you talking about?”

“There is an apparatus with the Plain of Darkness that churns out fighters. These are certified fighters”

“Such high quality troops can be developed so easily?”

Azell was surprised. Laura spoke.

“The number isn’t that high. I wouldn’t call the process to be easy. They keep sorting them. Each members are chosen for a role most suited for them, and they are developed.”

“When you say they are specialized.... So a fighter, who has the

same level of fighting capability as a magician, only knows about fighting? The fighter's knowledge about magic and how to respond to magic is much inferior to the magician?"

"Yes."

"Such a method... Hmm. It is unacceptable."

In an army, each soldier learned a specialized skill. For example, let us say there was a knight, who was excellent at horsemanship, archery and closed combat. An archer in the army would be at the very least on par with the knight in terms of shooting a bow. However, the archer would be worse at everything else. It wouldn't even be comparable.

This was how the Dragon Demon king worshippers were developed. The 'rank and file' magicians were specialized to be only used in battle. They were given all kinds of inhumane drugs. Rituals were used to bring up their magical energy. On the surface, they looked like high level magicians. However, if one looked at their overall abilities, they were incomprehensibly weak.

Laura spoke.

"The rank and file members uses a device."

"There is a device that allows one to hide one's Dragon Demon magic?"

"Yes."

"Do you have one?"

At his question, Laura shook her head from side to side. According to her explanation, the act of learning it was the difficult part. However, once one learns it, the magical consumption of the spell wasn't that high, and it could be maintained indefinitely.

This was why most didn't feel the need to learn the magic. They preferred to use a one-off magical device that could replicate the

same effect instead of going through the difficult process of learning it. However, there were always problems with magical devices. Different magic magic spells could clash, and the capacity of magic it could hide was a limiting factor. This was why it wasn't too wise to use magical devices as a quick fix.

Azell queried.

“Still, I placed magical shunts inside you, so it should be restricting your use of magic... Are you sure you can keep up with us?”

“You really are like a magician.”

Laura replied with an off-the-wall answer. When Azell looked puzzled, she spoke.

“The way you maintain the magical shunts, and the methods you use.... I'm starting to think you are actually a magician.”

“Spirit Order is merely a different facet of magic.”

In truth, Azell's Spirit Order techniques was completely off the beaten path of common sense. He was able to change the properties of the magical energy, and certain techniques he used was able to be controlled from a distance. If one compared him to a regular Spirit Order Practitioner... He was a transcendent warrior, who used a power that was closest to magic.

Azell spoke.

“It is hard to do it only with magic possessed by a human. However, once you know how to wield the power of the Dragon, it is possible..”

If a Spirit Order Practitioner wanted to move forward into the ultimate stage, one had to eventually complete the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. Dragon Demon magic had many use if one was able to acquire it.

“There are less constraints when dealing with magic.”

This was the conclusion he came to when he studied the fundamental phenomena behind raising and controlling magic. If one possessed Dragon Demon magic, one could circumvent the steps needed to use magic. However, it wasn't an exaggeration to say the Dragon Demon magic was mainly used to make Dragon Demon Qi. Magicians had no other use for the Dragon Demon magic.

By comparison, Spirit Order was a technique that promoted the use of the senses. Dragon Demon magic had a special characteristic of being able to bring an image into reality. Spirit Order was able to take advantage of this fact more so than magic.

Laura spoke.

“...I never knew that.”

“If it is as Yuren said, the humans in the Plain of Darkness aren't allowed to conduct the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. They have no Spirit Order Practitioner, who possess Dragon Demon magic. It is understandable that you do not know about it.”

Azell had learned this very useful information. At the very least, there was a huge restriction placed in how the Dragon Demon king worshippers developed their Spirit Order practitioners.

Azell spoke.

“Anyways.... I guess I didn't answer your question again. ”

“It's all right.”

Laura spoke as she looked up at the empty air.

“I'm used to all of this now.”

“I thought you've never moved in this fashion before.”

“I'm not talking about that.”

Laura was talking about the restriction caused by the magical shunts in her Energy Pulse. She thought about her past as she spoke.

“While I learned how to use magic, I went through a lot of hardships. At times, they put Curses on us. We had to face dangerous situations, while our abilities were compromised.”

As she went through such training, her siblings started to die one by one. Laura had also escaped from the throes of death several times.

“.....”

Azell had thought she had experienced forceful restriction of her magic as part of her magic training, but he never expected this. He was at a loss for words. However, Laura didn’t show any signs of anxiety as she talked about her past.

Suddenly, there was an odd light in her eyes. Her expression hadn’t changed much, but he could feel that she was feeling a complicated emotion.

“This feels strange.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m conversing with someone about my past... I never expected it to feel like this.”

“You’ve never talk about it with anyone?”

“I never had anyone I could talk to.”

“.....”

“Somehow, this feels embarrassing, but.... It isn’t a bad feeling.”

Laura closed her eyes as she spoke those words.

4

The next day, the party decided to change course. It was at Yuren’s request.

“The guide has a gift for you, and he told me where to find it.”

“...you keep saying that. Do you really think you can entice me to go with you with those words?”

“I don’t know what else to say. Aside from that, I do have other useful information....”

Yuren told Azell about the Plain of Darkness, who was about to sow chaos in the human world. Azell and Kairen furrowed their brows.

“They are capable of pulling off such a plan. However, the source of this information is a bit....”

“Sadly, I don’t have any other explanations for this.”

Yuren let out a bitter laugh. He felt sad every time he had to explain about his guide. It would have been better if he was a man of faith. He could just say god was guiding his actions. However, he couldn’t do that....

Yuren spoke.

“All the high quality information I know was revealed to me by the guide. I was a candidate in the Development Center, so I didn’t know much about anything.”

“Mmm. Laura?”

“...I do think this this relationship is quite peculiar.”

After betraying the Dragon Demon king worshippers, Yuren had been actively trying to help Azell. His words had a ring of truth to it. This was why Azell was trying to confirm the information with Laura. She had been a high ranked officer in the Plain of Darkness not too long ago.

It was a highly ridiculous situation if one organized the information.

Laura spoke.

Chapter 117 – Guide's Gift (3)

Laura spoke.

“He is speaking the truth.”

“Are you saying the Dragon Demon king worshippers will try to start a war between humans?”

“Everything he said was true including that fact.”

“Are you talking about the part where he said the Plain of Darkness was plotting to let human society descend into chaos?”

“It is like what happened in Yuren Rizester's past.”

When Yuren was young, he was disguised as a street urchin. His mission was to assassinate a well-off old couple. The Dragon Demon king worshippers had wanted the blameless old couple dead, because they wanted control over a particular neighbourhood. A reasonable offer to purchase the couple's house had been turned down, so the Dragon Demon king worshippers had used a dirty method.

These types of method were used to create a foothold that allowed the Dragon Demon king worshippers to burrow into human society. They interfered with the succession of countryside nobles to swallow these noble families whole. They also dominated the underground criminal organizations in order to spread drugs.

Azell furrowed his brows.

“Drugs?”

Yuren was the one to answer him.

“It is an effective way to corrupt humans. It leads to a diseased society. The drugs manufactured by Dragon Demon king worshippers are strong and cheap. This is why it is widely circulated amongst humans.”

“.....”

Azell was struck dumb. He had never thought about such things.

Laura continued to speak.

“The presence of the Guardian Shadows restricted their activities... However, this was also the reason why their methods to influence humanity diversified.”

Before the Guardian Shadows made their presence known, the Plain of Darkness had been able to be very bold in carrying out their plans. They were able to embed spies into the main nobles families and the royal family. It had been a dark times where they were even able to influence, who took the throne.

This all changed when the Guardian Shadows appeared. People with rank and power like Kairen were recruited, and the activities of the Plain of Darkness were restricted. In the beginning, the Plain of Darkness were unaware of the existence of the Guardian Shadows, so countless plans had been wiped out in its entirety before they knew it.

Laura spoke.

“The time before the Guardian Shadows existed... Basically, these methods were never used before the Vast Darkness. Truthfully, if the Vast Darkness worked according to plan, we wouldn't have needed to wait for the revival of the king to....”

“...wait a moment.”

Azell had not interrupted her words. It was Kairen. He asked with a trembling voice.

“Are you trying to say.... The Vast Darkness was an artificial disaster caused by the Dragon Demon king worshippers?”

Laura tilted her head in puzzlement at his words. She was still expressionless, but the gesture looked as if she was asking how he couldn't have known this fact.

“Yes. That's.....”

Pahk!

In a flash, a dull sound rang out in front of Laura. Kairen's hands were already right in front of Laura's neck. He had been about to snap her slender neck, but he wasn't able to. Azell had stopped Kairen by grabbing his wrists.

"...Duke."

"....."

Kairen was glaring at Laura as if he wanted to kill her on the spot. For a brief moment, he had lost all rationality.

Kairen had lived through the Vast Darkness.

Azell spoke.

"The fact that I have to defend her is funny, but she wasn't even born during that time period. Please cool you head."

"...I'm sorry."

Kairen apologized with a trembling voice as he withdrew his hands.

The Vast Darkness was a nightmare he would never be able to put behind him. He was called the Dragon Sword Duke. He was a hero within the Rulain Kingdom, yet he had been helpless against the Vast Darkness. This truth had made him despair.

People mourned as others died in pain. There was no way the diseased people could be saved, so he had to keep making agonizing decisions... It had been a horrific era.

Azell spoke to Laura.

"Continue."

"...Yes."

Laura's voice shook slightly. It seemed she had been frightened from what had just happened to her.

"The Vast Darkness is one of the king's legacy."

“...Atein? That is preposterous.”

“Why do you say that?”

“If he had such a thing, why didn’t he use it in the Dragon Demon war? I saw the records. At the time of the Vast Darkness, everyone was helpless against the spreading plague until Baion came up with a cure.”

“The king hadn’t left it behind for it to be used as a weapon.”

“What do you mean?”

“There are records left behind by Aunsaurus in the Plain of Darkness.”

The Aunsaurus stored the records as if they were holy scriptures. There were a lot of them. Aunsaurus had been a magician, so he had enjoyed documenting everything. He had lived for a very long time, so he had written over 100 volumes of records.

When Laura became Aunsaurus’ heir, she had read all the records. This was also a big reason why Laura had become interested in Azell.

“This happened when the king hadn’t crowned himself king yet... The four Dragon Demon generals and the king were the subject of many legends.”

Folklores of unknown origin were handed down amongst humans. However, many of these stories were lost during the Dragon Demon war, the fall of the Nadick empire and the Vast Darkness.

However, Aunsaurus had been part of all these events, and his records had remained intact.

“You guys might not believe this, but... The king and the four Dragon Demon generals used to travel around the world, and they had saved a lot of people before the Dragon Demon war.”

They had wandered around the world for over a thousand years.

They explored uncharted lands, and they fought against beings, who threatened the world. They even helped people in distress to become a beacon of hope.

In this process, they encountered an enemy, who called himself to be the god of pestilence.

“Are you perhap talking about a real god?”

“Aunsaurus evaluated that this being had the power and authority to legitimately call himself a god.”

The being was too bizarre to be thought of as a lifeform from this world. He was able to control all kinds of diseases. He even used diseases to grant regular humans superhuman strength. These men were made into his apostles. It wasn't hard to see why Aunsaurus had made such an evaluation.

“The king and the Dragon Demon Generals fought and won against this being. However, they couldn't eliminate the god of pestilence.”

Surprisingly, the god of pestilence was almost close to being an immortal. He was defeated by the combined might of the king and the Dragon Demon generals. However, he couldn't be eradicated. Even the weapon he used was like a holy item that couldn't be destroyed.

“This was why the king had sealed him.”

The essence of the god of pestilence, and his holy item was sealed by Atein's magic. It was sealed in a place where human hands wouldn't be able to reach it... It was a frozen land located in the north. It was considered to be end of the world. Basically, it was the Plain of Darkness.

“No one could unravel the seal placed on the god of pestilence. However, the idea to use the holy item was developed.”

However, even that wasn't easy to do. After a very long research conducted by the Plain of Darkness, they found a way to use it in a

limited fashion.

“The power of the holy item was used to create a Cursed Disease. It’s the source of the Vast Darkness.”

If Sage Baion hadn’t appeared, the Vast Darkness would have eradicated the humans. When the Plain of Darkness was about to achieve their ultimate goal, Baion had lit a beacon of hope for the humans.

Of course, the Plain of Darkness tried to eliminate Baion. However, the Guardian Shadows appeared out of nowhere, and they rebuffed the Plain of Darkness.

“Baion’s existence is still considered to be a mystery to those within the Plain of Darkness. He was a human, who hadn’t learned magic, yet he was able to cure the disease. The Plain of Darkness had made the disease, but even they hadn’t known how to cure it.”

In the end, the Plain of Darkness couldn’t solve this question, and they saw their mounting ambitions crumble. They suffered a big setback. Afterwards, the fierce battle between the Plain of Darkness and the Guardian Shadows started in the shadow of the world.... The fight was still ongoing.

“Baion and the Guardian Shadows. These two factors made the Plain of Darkness lose more than they had gained.”

“However, didn’t they finish manipulating information using the Vast Darkness?”

“Manipulating information?”

“I’m talking about the Dragon Demon Qi and the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.... Then there are the information regarding the essence of Spirit Order.”

“That was already almost completed before the Vast Darkness.”

“Mmm?”

Laura started talking about the deletion of knowledge, which was

conducted by the Plain of Darkness, to the puzzled Azell. The manipulation of information in regards to the Dragon Demon Qi, Dragon Slayer's Ritual and the essence of Spirit Order started when the Nadick Empire started to crumble.

“The upper echelon of our organization were afraid of humanity.”

The knowledge of Magic and Spirit Order wasn't shared like the other disciplines of studies. It was like martial arts where knowledge was only revealed to the disciples of one's sect. These were knowledge contained within a closed ecosystem.

The closed nature of the information made it very easy for the Plain of Darkness to achieve their goal. The talented magicians and Spirit Order practitioners were killed alongside their disciples. Then the Plain of Darkness deleted their research. These simple steps allowed them to stop the information from being passed on to the future generation.

“Afterwards... A lot of effort was put into cutting off the knowledge of the Dragon Demon Qi and the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.”

This task was only possible, because of the Great Darkness within Aincera.

The humans could only exceed the Dragon Demons only if they gained the Dragon Demon Qi through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

The Dragon Demon war had engraved a great fear within the Dragon Demon king worshippers, so they devoted themselves to eradicating the knowledge.

Azell clicked his tongue.

“That sounds preposterous... It was true that the Dragon Demon war was a bit of an anomaly. People willingly shared their techniques and knowledge during the war. However, I can see that such practices would have inevitably come to an end.”

The continent, which had been controlled by the Nadick Empire, had been broken into seven kingdoms. This accelerated the disposition of people to hoard their knowledge. As the number of foes and competitors increased, the worth of secret techniques went up. It became something that wasn't easily shared with others.

Azell spoke.

“Now that I think about it, the Guardian Shadows didn't know about the Dragon Demon Qi either. Not all of them knew about the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.”

All the questions Azell possessed now clicked into place within his mind. He realized this was a grand conspiracy of epic proportion that had spanned much longer than a human's lifetime. He sighed.

5

In the end, Azell took Yuren's advice, and they changed their course. The information from the guide wasn't credible to Azell, but he felt the need to learn more about Yuren. This was worth checking out at least once.

Yuren looked at the map, and he pointed out the location. The location was quite a way off. At the party's current speed, it would take four days.

While they were traveling, Azell felt a bit amazed when he watched Laura.

“I'm asking just in case... Is washing the dishes fun for you?”

Laura was washing the dishes.

The work of setting up the camp was divided between the party member. This work included preparing the meals and washing the dishes. Laura participated in all the chores except keeping night watch and cooking food.

Laura was like a girl from a noble family. She was unaccustomed to doing miscellaneous work. If there were any glasses or vases around, she would have already broken couple of them. However, items they brought were for traveling. They were either made out of metal or wood. Therefore, she didn't cause any irreversible mishaps.

Laura nodded her head.

“Yes.”

“.....”

“This... I've never done this before.”

Of course, as a high ranking official within the Plain of Darkness, she hadn't had the opportunity to wash the dishes. All the miscellaneous tasks were done by her subordinates. She only had to worry about fighting.

“It is enjoyable to clean something with one's hands.”

“I...is that so?”

“Yes.”

“After you became an officer, you never had the opportunity to do any of this? Aside from washing dishes, didn't you clean your room or prepare food?”

“All of that was taken care of by the servants.”

“Hmmm.....”

It was very odd. She had been treated inhumanely, and she had been pushed to the brink of death as she grew up. At the same time, she had been treated like a noble lady by those within the Plain of Darkness.

Laura spoke as she saw her reflection on the bowl she had just cleaned.

“When I always came out into the world, it was always boring. It

is fun now.”

“That isn’t something a hostage should say.”

Azell grumbled.

It didn’t matter what he said. Laura really looked like a girl really enjoying the trip.

In her life, she had never shared her emotions with anyone. She had never experienced this before. In the past, she was always with people, who were separated her by rank.

When she lived in the Plain of the Darkness, she only derived joy from finding old records within the cold yet quiet castle. Moreover, it hadn’t been too long since she had asked for stories from the unknown ‘elder’.

She only went outside when he received a mission. Only her subordinates stayed close to her during these missions. She was revered by them as their superior, and they only talked to her about the mission. She basically stared blankly into the empty air to pass time until it was time for her to fight.

This was why she liked her current situation. The people around her showed hostility and suspicion towards her. However, they spoke to her as equals, and she actually had people she could spend time with.

“Since I’ve been born... I’ve never spoken this much before..”

After surrendering to Azell, she had talked a lot. Just from answering Azell’s questions, she had spoken more words than she had in the past 10 years combined. It was very rare for Laura to converse with someone else.

Suddenly, Laura asked a question.

“Do you think there will come a time when I’m not a hostage any more?”

“.....”

Azell looked at her with a complicated expression on his face. As time passed, Laura made him feel off balanced.

As if Laura hadn't expected an answer, she turned away. In the end, Azell couldn't say anything to her back.

Chapter 118 – Guide’s Gift (4)

6

“I think it should be around here somewhere.....”

On the next morning, Yuren led the party to a cave located halfway up a mountain. The road up was winding, and numerous boulders were piled upon other. It was difficult to locate the entrance to the cave.

“Mmm. It’s here. I’m sure of it.”

“What’s supposed to be here?”

“I don’t know.”

“.....”

Everyone looked at Yuren as if they wanted to hit him. Kairen sighed as he spoke to Leticia.

“I can’t believe you trusted this guy enough to make him your companion.”

“...sometimes I do regret my decision. I’m happy that there are more people, who feel the same way as me.”

Leticia grumbled. After she started traveling with Yuren, she had become frequently annoyed by his attitude.

Yuren laughed.

“Ah, well. I just know that something good is here.... I don’t know how else I should explain this. How unfortunate.”

“I sometimes wish you were a poor speaker. Just shut up, and lead us from the front.”

When Leticia growled her words, Yuren shrugged his shoulders. He was the at the forefront of the group as he led the party into the cave. He put up a ball of light that would precede him, then he used his Flight magic to float through the air.

“The guide said there are magical traps here. It’ll activate if you step on it, so please avoid doing so. I’m also using a Detection magic, but there might be some traps that I might not be able to find. So everyone should be careful.... Do you mind if I place the Flight spell on all of you?”

Yuren hesitated before he asked the question. The act of placing the Flight spell on others could be seen as a precursor for him to double cross the party. While in mid-air, the Magician had complete control over their subject, so they had no idea what he’ll do.

However, Azell didn’t worry over it. He nodded his head.

“Do it.”

“Are you sure?”

“My sword is faster than whatever you can do.”

“...wow. That hurts a little bit.”

“I can’t say I trust you, because you haven’t earned enough of my trust for me to so.”

“Still, couldn’t you have said it in a more roundabout way?”

Yuren grumbled as he placed the Flight spell on the whole party except Laura. The party entered the cave, while they floated 30 cm up in the air.

The cave entrance was very steep. However, after a certain point, the steep slope leveled out, and the cave gradually expanded in size. Azell was astonished.

“We would have been in deep trouble if we just charged in here.”

“There is unquestionably a lot of magical spells placed in here.”

Even Kairen was astonished. The magical traps were perfectly hidden. Still, Yuren’s Detection magic revealed their existence. The spell shouldn’t have revealed every one of them, but an incredible amount of traps were detected, while they traveled for

200 meters.

This was one thing Azell could do nothing about. If he focused, he could tell that there were magic spells around him, and he could sense that the spells were dangerous. However, he couldn't give any detailed information about the magic spells. He couldn't disable them either. This was the territory of the Magicians.

"I'm pretty sure there are magic spells that aren't reacting to the Detection spell. How are you evading those?"

"I have the Key spell. We just have to avoid the magic spells that will activate when we step on it. We just have to avoid the area of detection. The rest...."

"I don't think it is easy as you make it out to seem."

"The guide gave me a sketch of the set up, and he told me the Key spell."

"....."

Azell looked at Yuren as if to say he found Yuren's words to be dubious. If one thought logically, Yuren or his acquaintances had probably made this place. There was a possibility that their party was being lured into a trap....

'On the other hand, he doesn't look like the type to be good at acting.'

At this point, he really was curious about Yuren's identity. Actually, he wanted to know the identity of the guide.....

The party continued forward. There were so many traps that the progress was slow. Still, the tension went down a notch, because they didn't encounter any danger.

"Is it around 300 meters? This place is pretty deep."

It was hard to estimate the distance they had travelled, but Azell knew the exact distance to the entrance. However, his wariness kept increasing.

Woo-ooong.....

Suddenly, Azell felt a magical energy rise up from within him.

‘Vitan’s Chalice?’

Vitan’s Chalice was reacting to something in his surrounding. It was as if it was trying to tell him something. When Azell focused on the sensation, he became aware of a fact.

“...I see.”

“What’s wrong?”

Kairen asked a question Azell clicked his tongue.

“It’s very clever. We haven’t even descended 30 meters yet.”

“What?”

Everyone looked at Azell in surprised. Azell looked at Yuren as he asked a question.

“You knew about this?”

“I was curious as to when you were going to realize it. It took me awhile to realize it too... I’ve been trying to access the magic directly to open the lock... How did you find out?”

“The Vitan’s Chalice alerted me to it. If not, I might have either found out about it at a much later time or I might have not known about it at all.”

“What are you guys talking about? Please explain it to us.”

Kairen was frustrated, so he spoke up. Azell spoke.

“We’ve entered into a distorted space. This cave is only 30 meters long, yet the space was distorted to make us go around in circles.... It is made in a very clever way. I didn’t even feel the trace of this magic.”

Azell shivered. This place was made by someone with incredible skills. This person was a high rank magician, who was able to manipulate space. It was very rare to see a magician skilled enough

to distort a fixed space, and mess with the sense of space. He was skillful enough to make Azell feel as if he had traveled 10 times the original distance....

‘He is dangerous.’

The Vitan’s Chalice was probably frustrated that its owner hadn’t known what was going on, so it gave him the answer. At the same time, this put Azell on alert. He hadn’t known he was inside a magic spell until he was actually in it. This meant a trap could be sprung without him knowing about it. They might already be in a trap. Azell was about to bring out the Vitan’s Chalice when Yuren spoke.

“You don’t have to bring out your Dragon weapon. The lock has been released. I just have to open the door, and we’ll be able to exit this place.”

“How long has it been since you unlocked it?”

“It’s been about 10 minutes.”

“...you were watching us roam around?”

“I was curious as to when you’ll realize it. I was going to watch you all for five more minutes then I would have released the spell.”

“.....”

“Don’t be angry. I thought it was a great opportunity to check out the abilities of my comrades.”

Azell flinched at those words. Yuren looked at Azell quizzically, and Azell saw an image superimposed on Yuren.

“What is it?”

“...you just reminded me of someone I knew.”

He had wanted to smack Yuren, and his actions reminded Azell of Carlos. Before they became best friends, Carlos always used to test Azell using various methods. Even in difficult situations he could stop at any time, Carlos just observed the situation. He watched to

see how far Azell could be pushed, and he spoke in a patronizing manner when everything was wrapped up. At such times, Azell had wanted to beat up Carlos.

At that moment, Yuren looked like Carlos. The fact that their faces looked similar added to the similarity.

‘Is he really Carlos’ descendant?’

Azell thought about the past, and it happened when he was in a state of confusion.

Something suddenly stimulated Azell’s senses.

“...mmm?”

At the same time, Yuren dispelled the magic that was distorting the space. A haze formed, and the landscape curved to form an entirely different surrounding..

“This is.....”

Everyone looked at their surrounding in surprise. They were at the end of the cave before they knew it. It wasn’t that large of a space, and in the middle, there was a pillar letting out a low blue light. Within it....

“Is that a magical armor?”

There was a set of white armor arranged inside.

Azell’s expression turned peculiar when he saw it.

“This... Is this...”

At that moment, Yuren stepped in front of the armor, and he spun on his heels. Then he opened his arms wide as if he was an actor from a theater troupe. He spoke dramatically.

“This is the gift that the guide wanted me to give you.”

“Do you know what it is?”

“Of course, I have no idea!”

“.....”

“Well, by the look of it, isn’t it a really good magical armor?”

“Mmmm.”

Azell looked at the armor with a complicated expression on his face.

At that moment, Laura spoke up.

“White Dragon armor?”

“Huh?”

Everyone turned to look at her. Laura stared at the armor as she spoke.

“This looks similar to the White Dragon armor worn by Azell Karzark.”

“.....”

This was the reason why Azell had a complicated expression on his face. This armor looked like the one he had worn during the Dragon Demon war.

7

At the time of the Dragon Demon war, Azell had pretty much worn magic battle-gear all over his body. The White Dragon armor used Dragon’s bones as framework. The Dragon’s scales were melted and it was combined with magic metal. This armor and helmet was made using these ingredients.

“White Dragon armor....”

Azell approached the armor. Then he looked at his surrounding before he spoke.

“Mmm. Is it ok if I touch it?”

“All the magic spells were disabled. The armor might be able to determine if a person is worthy to be its owner.”

“It is a magic gear that has self-awareness?”

“Maybe. It’s probably not smart. It probably has a faint instinct it can act on.”

Aside from the Dragon weapons, there were magical gears out there that possessed self-awareness. They were able to choose worthy owners. It seemed this armor was such an item.

Azell spoke.

“This isn’t the White Dragon armor.”

“Huh? But... It looks the same.”

Laura tilted her head in puzzlement.

“You’ve actually seen the White Dragon armor before?”

“I’ve only seen it in the records. It is the same as the one in the recorded image.”

Kairen butted into the conversation.

“I’ve also seen the portrait of Azell Karzark, and the design looks similar... Why are you so sure that it isn’t the real thing?”

“The White Dragon armor isn’t an item that possess self-awareness. I’m sure about that.”

The White Dragon armor had not been made for Azell in the first place. It was an equipment he stole from his enemy. When he obtained it, he had given it to the smith to resize it. However, there were no other requirements in using that particular equipment.

“However, it seems someone really made an exact replica of the White Dragon armor.”

Azell carefully picked up the helmet placed on top of the armor. At the same time, something swept over his senses.

‘Mmmm?’

Azell reflexively tried to shield his senses, but he gave up on it. He realized a magical thought contained within the helmet was

flowing into his senses.

-Hmm. Can you hear my voice?

From within Azell, someone's voice rang out.

Azell had heard this voice once before.

‘...Carlos?’

It was similar to the thought manifestation of the old Carlos he met inside the ruin of the Balan Forest. When Azell saw him, he spoke.

‘You are the one, who left this behind for me. Even after you lost all your hair, you are reliable....’

-If you can hear my voice, the person to acquire this item must be Azell.

The thought manifestation of Carlos ignored Azell's words as it spoke what it had to say.

Azell realized it when he saw Carlos' behavior.

Chapter 119 – Guide's Gift (5)

‘It is only a recording.’

Carlos' manifestation of thought left behind in the ruins of the Balan Forest was similar to a ghost. It was able to think and converse by itself. On the other hand, this was just a recording. It delivered Carlos image and voice to Azell.

When he realized this fact, he felt disappointment wash over him. Even if it was a ghost-like manifestation, he had been excited about being able to converse with his friend.

-That fact that you were able to acquire this.... You were able to complete two tasks, and my prediction is heading towards the most positive direction. You were able to find and acquire this item before others could find it. Moreover, you were able to obtain the map from your sleeping place.

In the ruins of the Balan Forest, Carlos had arranged many things for him within the sleeping place of Azell. However, Azell hadn't been able to acquire anything except for his Dragon Maken. It would be useless to point out this fact to the manifestation, since it was only a recording.

-I don't know how many of them are left. Please try to acquire all of them. I thought about storing everything in one location, but the risk was too high. This was why I placed the items in various locations when I had the chance. In the past, I always wondered why Magicians kept creating facilities that would be found as ruins by the future generation.... I can now understand why they did it.

Carlos' manifestation let out a bitter laugh.

-Ah. I should tell you what this is. I designed it exactly like your White Dragon armor. However, you probably realized at a glance that this isn't your White Dragon armor.

This was a replica of the White Dragon armor. Carlos had made it

with the help of his comrades. It was a replica, but it was better than the original.

-I spent a good amount of money making this. If you sell this, you'll be able to buy a castle easily. Ah. That doesn't mean you should sell it. Only I could have made this armor. It is something you won't be able to purchase with money.

‘.....’

Azell couldn't help, but laugh. There were several decades difference between this Carlos and the Carlos he had known, yet Azell couldn't believe how much he hadn't changed.

-Azell. I hope what I left behind for you will help you face your future tribulations. My body is old, and I regret that I cannot stand by you during your time of need.

After fulfilling its task, Carlos' mental manifestation disappeared, and Azell's consciousness returned to reality. Azell mumbled bitterly as the White Dragon armor easily accepted him with no resistance.

“Me too.”

8

Azell put on the White Dragon armor immediately. He took off his leather armor, and he recited the keyword....

Chul-kuhng! Chul-kuh-kuhng!

The White Dragon armor broke apart into pieces, and it reformed perfectly around Azell's body. When Kairen saw this, his eyes turned round.

“Azell.”

“Yes?”

“This is the first time I've been jealous of an item you possess.”

“Hoo hoo. Even if you say such words, I won't be giving this to

you. I've been a bit disappointed at the state of my own defense, but now.....”

“No, I don't care about that. It is an armor that can be put on and off automatically. What a revolutionary idea. Shit.”

“.....”

A full body armor was always terribly difficult to put on and off. Once knights put on their armor in battle, they kept it on even if they became filthy. When one's bladder was about to burst, knights sometimes contemplated not taking off the armor before going to the restroom. The decision came down to whether the knight wanted to lose his dignity as a human rather than go through the difficult process of taking off the armor.

For reference, the original White Dragon armor didn't have the automatic equip function. In the past, Azell had used his Spirit Order's telekinesis skill to take off his armor. His laziness allowed him to grow in proficiency using that skill.

Suddenly, Laura spoke.

“It really looks the same.....”

“Mmm?”

“You look like Azell Karzark.”

“.....”

Unlike other people, Laura had actually seen the recorded image of Azell in the Dragon Demon war. Azell already looked eerily like the real Azell Karzark. Now he was wearing an armor of the same design, so it felt as if the figure in the record had appeared in reality.

She spoke.

“Now that I see it, the cape is different.”

“This cape doesn't seem special.”

During the Dragon Demon war, Azell had worn a red magic cape made out of Dragon leather. On the other hand, it seemed Carlos had made this cape using magic when he replicated the White Dragon armor. It wasn't some amazing object.

‘Anyways, that guy.... Did his thought process change as he grew older? He made protections against water, heat and even dirt?’

It would be very hard to dirty this cape, since it had been treated with protection magic. Carlos had also put in an auto-equip function for the armor. Carlos had devised solutions that was strangely practical and convenient.

‘In the past, he usually put performance above all else....’

This had been a common complaint from others when they obtained magical items made by Carlos. It felt as if one was complaining on a full stomach when one was able to acquire a valuable magical item made by Carlos. However, what would happen if a person, who showcases a precision style sword art, was given a heavy and thick blade for the sake of performance? Of course, people would have no choice but to complain.

‘How dare a mere human try to raise objection to a rare artificer like me? You don't like my magical item? I bet my magical device hates you too. Just shut up, and you adjust to the magical item. If you don't like it, I can give it to someone else. I chose to give it to you, and you are rejecting it. I'll strike you off of my waiting list. Let's see if your turn comes up before the damn war is over.’

...Carlos had been like that. It felt weird for Azell when he found out that Carlos took into consideration of the user's comfort and convenience when making this item.

Azell suddenly looked towards Yuren.

‘What is he.....’

He wondered what the identity of the guide was and why did the guide know about a facility left behind by Carlos? Moreover, how

was the guide able to tell Yuren about the methods needed to disable the magic spells protecting this place?

‘Maybe, this is Carlos’.... Did he arrange this too?’

That thought came to him. Of course, he didn’t have any evidence to support it...

Still, he looked at Yuren, who had stated that he was Carlos’ descendant. He looked so much like Carlos that Azell couldn’t help, but think about Carlos from his lifetime.

Yuren had a big smile on his face.

“What are you thinking? Do you like it?”

“Mmm.....”

Azell had a complicated expression on his face as he looked at Yuren. He nodded his head.

“Thank you. This is the best present ever.”

At the very least, he liked the present that had been prepared for him, so he was forced to admit it. There was the armor that reminded him of his past, and he had encountered the mental manifestation left behind by Carlos.....

9

Their business here was taken care of, so there was no reason to stay long in this place. The party immediately exited the cave.

“You all came out much faster than I had expected. This looked like a well hidden ruin, so I worried maybe I would have to wait a couple days for you guys to come out.”

A stranger was sitting on top of a boulder with his chin propped up on his hands. Azell was startled.

‘Who the hell is this?’

He was most definitely a human. However, Azell hadn’t sensed his presence even though they were only 10 meters apart.

The man looked to be in his mid to late 30s. He had long brown hair and a beard. His entire body was encased in metal armor, so he looked to be a knight.

The weird thing about him was his eyes. He had his face towards Azell, but his eyes were closed.

“Before I introduce myself... I’ll prove that I don’t have any ill intentions towards you.”

At the same time, the sound of children whispering could be heard in the surrounding. Guardian Shadows appeared in various locations. They were wearing white robes, but there was a incomprehensible darkness within the robes.

When he saw them, Azell realized something.

‘This bastard is similar to the Guardian Shadows.’

Azell was sure this man possessed a living body. However, he was able to thin his presence like the Guardian Shadows. He was able to avoid detection from Azell’s senses.

Of course, there was a condition. He had to be still. When the man stood up, his presence could be sensed by Azell. His presence was still weak, but it was detectable. Moreover...

‘He is one of the Keepers of the Prophecy.’

Azell could identify a Keeper of the Prophecy at a glance now. This man was also letting out the scent of Dragon Demon magic like Leone.

He still had his eyes closed as he approached Azell.

“I’m a Keeper of the Prophecy for the Guardian Shadows. My name is Balseru. This is the first time we are meeting face to face. You are Azell Zestringer, who might be the long awaited figure from our prophecy”

“I.....”

Azell spoke as he watched him.

“It doesn’t matter if it is the Dragon Demon king worshippers or you guys. Everyone keeps attaching long and annoying disclaimers to my name, but I think I’m getting used to it now.”

“If you don’t like it, I’ll shorten it. Do you mind me calling you sir Azell?”

“So should I be calling you sir Balseru?”

“You can call me whatever you want. It has been 50 years, since I’ve last worked as a knight.”

“.....”

Azell was taken aback by his words. Balseru looked to me in his mid-30s on the outside, yet he was that old?

“...so you are the same as Leone?”

“Yes. Our time stopped when we became the Keepers of the Prophecy. It has been a long time, since we’ve faced our death as humans.”

“You don’t look like an Undead.”

“I do the work that can’t be done by corpses.”

“What do you do?”

“You already know my answer to your question.”

“Basically, you won’t tell me anything until you confirm that I’m the prophesied person.”

“Yes.”

“Well, all right. Why did you come looking for me? Are you here to complain about Laura?”

Azell looked at the nearby Guardian Shadows as he spoke. They were showing open hostility towards Laura. It was as if they wanted to attack Laura at that moment, and it was clear they were holding back.

Balseru spoke.

“We are very dissatisfied, but we respect your decision. If you are revealed not to be the person in the prophecy, we’ll take care of her.”

“Ho-oh.”

“At the very least, you should withdraw your killing intent since we aren’t here to fight. I feel the same as all the Guardian Shadows here, and I’m trying very hard not to show it.....”

“Your tone of voice makes it sound as if you are trying to pick a fight with me.”

“If it was harsh to your ears, I apologize. This is only an excuse, but all the Keepers of the Prophecy had lost everything to the Dragon Demon King worshippers. This is why it is difficult for us to act rationally in front of Dragon Demon king worshippers.”

He spoke such words, but his voice was as calm as ever. This dissonance was so stark that it made Azell more wary.

“...it seems I’m making you more agitated by speaking. Let’s get to the main reason I’m here.”

“I’m here to deliver an important information. It isn’t a guarantee that you’ll be able to understand a Guardian Shadow, so I am here to deliver it.”

“.....”

It seemed the Keepers of the prophecy were well aware of the fact that Guardian Shadows were poor messengers. Azell and Kairen agreed with this sentiment a hundred fold.

Balseru spoke.

“The Plain of Darkness has revived the Dragon Demon General Reygus as an Undead. Moreover, he is powerful. He is on a different level compared to the other Undeads.”

“What?”

Azell was taken aback. However, his shock couldn’t be compared

to the one he felt after listening to Balseru's next words.

“He asked us a question. He asked us where we are hiding Carlos.”

“...Carlos?”

“It was as if he knew Carlos was still alive in some shape or form. Do you have any conjectures regarding this issue, sir Azell?”

“What are you.....”

Chapter 120 – Guide's Gift (6)

10

It had been awhile, since Niberis had returned to the Plain of Darkness. The wound inflicted by Azell was so deep that it took four days for her to regain consciousness. Even after waking up, she had to refrain from moving. She had to focus only on healing.

Two weeks had passed by like that.

Niberis was north of the Dragon Demon castle. She was visiting the resting place of the dead. It was where the truly revered members rested in eternal peace. These were members acknowledged by the Plain of Darkness

According to some stories she had heard before, this space had been quite desolate. It was a place where thousand soldiers could hold a parade, but only a few individuals had been buried here.

However, one or two headstones were added as time passed. The number of graves placed here grew. Currently, there was still a lot of empty space, but there were 300 headstones here. It wasn't a small number.

Niberis was looking for a specific headstone.

‘Dragon Demon Prince's Consort Elveris’

On the bottom, there were flowery words added eulogize the dead.

Niberis' mother was buried here. She had been much young than Saibein, and as a Dragon Demon, she had been weak in constitution. When one was part of the nobility class in the Plain of Darkness, one had to carry out duties that was befitting one's station. However, her mother was unable to do anything. All she could do was wither away in the cold land, which was separated from the rest of the world.

Niberis remembered the story told to her by her mother when she was young.

‘This might be silly for me to say, but your father was very prince-like. The humans tell of a prince on a white horse in their stories. Your father was that prince on a white horse.’

In Niberis’ memories, Elveris had always looked labored and tired. Her weak constitution wasn’t the only cause behind this. She had always lived with immense pressure placed on her. She was of high station, yet she couldn’t carry out her duties. There was always pressure from the outside for her to bear more children.

When she was young, Niberis had lived a carefree life compared to Kieren and Jeffers. Niberis was only child between Saibein and Elveris. This was why she didn’t have to fight others to ascend to her position as the heir. Moreover, her father hadn’t been strict, and he didn’t want her to suffer by witnessing death and suffering.

Despite this fact, Niberis insisted on living a difficult life even at an early age.

Niberis witnessed the elders berate her mother. They didn’t hesitate to speak insulting words like how she should be propagating the great bloodline by having more children if she couldn’t fulfil her other duties. It lit a fire inside Niberis’ young heart whenever she heard those words. The ancient and honorable blood flowed through Niberis’ veins. If she proved her ability, she had thought her mother would no longer hear such words.... She had thought that.

Elveris spoke.

‘If it wasn’t for your father, I would have died much earlier. In the past, I felt as if I was living in a cold prison. However, after meeting your father, I was able to breathe for the first time.’

Saibein had been a kind man.

The marriage between the two individuals had been a pure

political match. Saibein had been born before the Dragon Demon war, but Elveris had been born after the surviving remnant of the Dragon Demon army settled in the Plain of Darkness. There was an age gap of 100 years between the two. Moreover, Saibein hadn't even known what she had looked like until the marriage ceremony was underway.

Still, Saibein came to love Elveris, who had become his wife. His love was reflected in his actions. He didn't hesitate to act like a fool just to make her laugh.

When Elveris died, Saibein went missing. When Niberis awoke from her slumber, she had learned the tragic news that her mother had died, and her father had gone missing.

'Mother, I..... I lost the person left behind by father.'

Niberis spoke to her mother's grave inside her heart.

'He always tried to give me everything I wanted... I couldn't do anything for him.'

After she had lost her parents, Niberis' heart had frozen over. She had given her affection to no one. She acted cold and ruthless towards others as she moved towards the power that was her birthright.

However, a crack had formed on the cold castle wall that had been protecting her heart. She had lost to Azell in a way that didn't leave any room for doubt, and she had lost Duran. She didn't know what to do right now.

"....."

Niberis was deep in her thoughts when she flinched. A very bleak energy reached her senses.

<Hmmm.>

It was a voice that was unique to the Undead. It sounded fiendish. Niberis' eyes turned towards the source of the voice, and

she saw a big Dragon Demon undead, who dwarfed all Dragon Demons. He was over 3 meters tall.

<It seems I've disturbed you. I'm sorry.>

An Undead that looked like a Skeleton Knight was being very careful with his words. It was somehow a bit gross. However, Niberis quickly calmed her agitation as she gracefully gave her greeting.

"It's nice to meet you, sir Reygus."

The large Undead was none other than the legend from the Dragon Demon war. He was the Dragon Demon general Reygus.

Reygus had been about to scratch his cheek when his hand paused in mid-air.

<Ah. Damn it. I can't fix my habits.>

He had been awake as an Undead for a good amount of time now, but the habits he had in life appeared naturally. He awkwardly dropped his hand as he spoke.

<You are prince Saibein's daughter? You are Ms Niberis?>

"Yes."

<It is a pleasure to meet you. I'm Reygus.>

This was the first time the two of them had met. However, everyone within the Plain of Darkness knew about Reygus. This was why she was able to identify him at a glance.

<Actually, I'm here, because I wanted to ask you about something.... It seems this isn't the right time to do so. I'll meet you at a later date.>

"You wanted to speak to me?"

Niberis looked at him in confusion.

What did he want to ask her?

Reygus didn't speak as his stride quickly brought him near the

headstone. He mumbled to himself.

<I'm a corpse walking through amongst the graves. It is funny... On the other hand, there are a lot of name here that I know.>

The first to be buried here were the surviving forces of the Dragon Demon king's army. These were the beings, who died after returning to the Plain of Darkness. However, as time passed, those who died an honorable death in the Dragon Demon war was place here as a way to respects them. Their corpses weren't buried here, but they felt duty bound pay tribute to them.

The silence went on for a while.

Reygus turned away as he spoke.

<I'm sorry I bothered you. I'll find you again at a more suitable location.>

"No... We can speak."

Niberis also turned away from the headstone as she spoke.

"Let us have the conversation somewhere else."

<Thank you.>

Reygus walked away as he took big strides. He suddenly turned around to look at her.

<Ah. Damn it. I keep forgetting I walk unnecessarily fast. Whether in life or death, that hasn't changed.>

Reygus had been a mountain of a man, so he walked very quickly with his long strides. In the past, his lieutenant Chanes had to run to keep up with him. Reygus still had this habit, so even at his old age, Chanes had to run to keep up with him.

Reygus didn't care if a males had difficulty keeping up with him or not. However, he wanted to be respectful towards this young lady.

The two of them left the final resting place of the dead, and they

started walking. They walked across a large hallway that was flowing with cold air. Niberis asked a question.

“What would you like to hear from me?”

<It’s just that.... I heard you inherited prince Saibein’s ‘Book of Darkness.’>

At his words, Niberis flinched. Everyone in the Plain of Darkness knew about it, so she didn’t have a good reason to react this way. However, she felt a complicated emotion wash over her as she remembered the old memories she had thought about in front of her mother’s grave.

Reygus spoke.

<From your report, you weren’t able to meet prince Saibein.>

“...yes.”

This had occurred before Laura was sent out to kidnap Seigar. Niberis received orders from her elders to to search for her missing father Saibein. After she conducted a diligent search, she had found a trace leading her to his whereabouts.

However, it wasn’t easy to approach this location. It was one of the land of demons. It was a place that was known to be difficult to penetrate akin to the Plain of Darkness. The elders attempted to send in troops into this land several times to find Saibein. In the end, all of them went missing or they returned as corpses.

It was a very dangerous mission, yet there were two reason why she was chosen. Niberis was Saibein’s daughter, and she was talented enough to extract herself from danger.

However, Niberis wasn’t able to meet Saibein in the end.

“You probably heard this already.... It really was a strange event.”

<A Dragon delivered your Dragon Weapon. I’ve been briefed on it.>

“It was a Water Dragon.”

A Water Dragon lived in a body of water, and it could freely control the flow of water. This being had appeared in front of her, and it delivered Saibein’s Dragon weapon to her.

“It was as if I was dreaming. I never expected such a thing to be possible. However... The water dragon retreated, and the Book of Darkness was passed on to me. I could feel the faint imprint of my father’s thought resting within it.”

It delivered his will for her to take the book. It also told her to return to where she came from. The voice didn’t have any substance. It was a feeling that was delivered to her, so it was hard to tell if Saibein was still alive.

Still, she felt the urge to follow his instruction. Niberis returned to the Plain of Darkness with only the Book of Darkness to show for her efforts.

<I see.....>

Reygus’ voice was filled with sadness. Now that he had talked to her directly, he confirmed that Niberis had not been lying.

<Thank you for telling me your story. I want to apologize again for disturbing you during such an important time. I’ll...>

“Wait a moment.”

Niberis grabbed him. Reygus turned to look at her, and she couldn’t decipher his emotions. Niberis asked as she looked into the eye sockets of the skull.

“Do you know if humans.....”

<Humans?>

“I’m talking about the past. When the king conducted his holy war to right the world order.....”

Niberis hesitated for a moment as she brought up a story regarding the Dragon Demon war. She had grabbed Reygus on

impulse, but she was unsure if she should ask this question. However, her curiosity won out.

“...did humans use an insulting title to refer to my father?”

<Which insulting title are you talking about?>

“That is.....”

Niberis hesitated once again. When she heard the title for the first time, she felt so angry that it felt as if her blood was flowing in the wrong direction. She felt humiliated by the fact that she would have to repeat such words with her own mouth.

“Simpleton Prince....”

<.....>

Reygus was speechless for a moment. Niberis was embarrassed as she looked at him. However, she had no idea what the Undead was thinking. She couldn't read his expression.

After a brief moment, Reygus asked in a harsh tone.

<Who told Miss about that title?>

Chapter 121 – Specters from the Past (1)

1

The light, which was reflecting off the surface of the water, was dancing on the walls of the cave. The uneven surface of the wall had been created by the hands of nature, and a mysterious sight could be seen as the light undulated on the surface of wall.

Leone was watching this sight inside his dream. It was as if he was mesmerized.

However, he was aware. He knew he had never been to this place, and he had never seen this sight in real life.

So where did this memory originate? Was this an illusion created by his dream?

That wasn't it.

This site existed somewhere on this world. He was sure of it.

Moreover....

<Another empty seat has been filled..>

Someone was speaking from within the light. It was a bleak voice. It was as if someone had squeezed the dregs of darkness. It felt as if one's life span would shorten just from listening to that voice.

How could someone from this world possess such a voice?

Leone wondered about this question. However, when he saw the owner of the voice, he forgot to breathe from the surprise.

A faint light danced above the water gathered inside the cave. The fragment of light looked like fireflies flying through the midsummer night, but one couldn't see where the light originated. They were so faint that they looked as if they were about to be swallowed by the darkness. However, they were like flowers that wilted in the cold winter air before they bloomed once again in

season. The fragments of light were beautiful and ephemeral.

In the middle of this view, a silhouette wrapped up in darkness existed.

Strangely, Leone couldn't see his face. The fragments of light in the surrounding brushed by this figure, but he couldn't what was beneath the well-worn hood.

He spoke.

<Congratulations. You've been cursed.>

Leone was more focused on his appearance rather than his nonsensical words. The figure was submerged half in the water, so he looked beyond bizarre.

The well-worn robe covered his entire body, and it looked as if something was deeply embedded in its chest. At first, Leone thought it was a sword. However, the end was round. It was a wooden staff with a clear gem transfixed to the end. This wooden staff pierced through the figure's chest, and darkness was emanating from there.

Moreover, there was an oblong pillar made out of silver behind its back. Black chains bound him to the silver pillar, and one could see darkness crawling across the surface to form words. Darkness emanated from the characters as if it was a manifestation of a curse. It made Leone's skin crawl.

Leone asked a question.

"Who are you?"

<You don't need to know.>

He answered.

<We've never met before, and we'll never meet even in the future. You, who wanted to be cursed, will never have the opportunity to meet me if you attain your wish. If you do not attain your wish, you won't have a reason to meet me either.>

“But.....”

<You’ve never been to this place, and you will never return here again. >

His words rang like thunder in Leone’s ears, and the dream ended there.

“Mmm.....”

The Guardian Shadow’s Keeper of Prophecy Leone opened his eyes. He had seen this ceiling for several days, so he was used to it. He blankly stared up at the ceiling, and soon, he realized his body was soaked with cold sweat.

“I hate this. I always have this dream when I’m in a bad spot.”

“Do you mean your first memory? Isn’t that a good thing? Isn’t it proof that you are still alive?”

“Why are you here, brat Jares?”

“When you acted like a lazy bag of bones by not waking up in the afternoon, the young lady pestered me to look in on you. How did you bewitch her? She is a beautiful lady from a good bloodline. There is something wrong about her being enamored with the likes of you.”

“I don’t act arrogant like you.”

Leone snorted as he got up.

He was in a house of a person, who owed him a favor. After suffering a crushing defeat at the hands of Reygus, they had requested help from the nearby Guardian Shadows to help them evade their enemies. After losing their pursuers, they had come here to rest.

Jares shrugged his shoulder as if he couldn’t understand it.

“You’ve been going around acting as an agent of justice. You must have a lot of spare time.”

“Unlike you, the feeling of justice is still alive and well inside my heart.”

“...isn't that a low quality joke?”

“When I see your ugly mug, I can only come up with low quality jokes. Anyways, it is advantageous for us to rescue people when we have the time to spare. Currently, we are reaping the reward for what I did before.”

“I can't deny that logic. Should I go around and do some good deeds?”

“With your personality? It'll be impossible.”

“I can't dispute that fact. Hmm. What do you think he is, brat?”

“When you say he, who are you talking about?”

“The guy in our dreams. He's probably the guy, who made us into what we are.”

“He's a mage. He's probably someone very talented that remained hidden from the world. Moreover, he probably has a very deep grudge against the Dragon Demon king worshippers that can't be washed away....”

“My thoughts are a little bit different from yours.”

“You probably tried to come up with an unconventional answer to show off to others. If so, you are barking up the wrong tree.”

“...the fact that I can't categorically deny your accusation makes me feel a bit sad. Anyways, what do you think about my theory? What if he's a Demon?”

Jares grumbled. Leone furrowed his brows.

“Demon. What led you to have to have such a thought?”

“No matter how I look at it, all of this couldn't have been created by a human. The Demon race loves powerful souls of humans. Don't they reveal knowledge to humans to lead them to their

destruction?”

“Hmm. Then why would a Demon make the Guardian Shadows?”

“Well, I’m not a magician. I’m not too familiar with the Demons.... If you think about it, it might be a very clever ploy. The other Demons have to work on one subject at a time. Instead of convincing one person to make a contract, I think this Demon created a big farm that will bring him a continuous flow of souls to harvest.”

“Mmm. I’m not sure what you are trying to say.”

“First, the Demon race corrupts humans as they lead them down the road to destruction. Let’s talk about that point. I’m not sure how they measure how strong a soul is....”

“You speak as if you are some great magician with knowledge about this subject.”

“Well, I learned about it, while I studied about magic. Anyways, humans have a vast quantity of desires, and it’s a reason why they fall prey to the Demons. When I say desires, there are different types of desires. Most humans desire success in society. Martial artists desire to become stronger. Magicians want to gain forbidden knowledge that’ll put them above other magicians. Those in love want to possess the subject of their affection. The people with grudges want revenge..... If one looks at the record, the ones with the biggest desires are the ones, who become tempted by the Demons.”

“ I see. You’ve studied hard.”

“You should focus on two things. First, a Demon has to have a direct relationship with the fallen. The soul can only be taken by the Demon, who corrupted the human. Secondly, in the process of corrupting the humans, the Demons are negligent in what they give out.”

“Hmm. I can see what you are thinking. You think a Demon created a system called the Guardian Shadows by using humans with deep resentments. So you are saying this system is being used to harvest souls that are about to be destroyed?”

“Yes. I call it the farm of ruination.”

“It does sound plausible even if this was something you came up with it. Still, how are you defining what ‘ruination’ is? In a typical story about the Demon race, they are very nuanced in their approach. They make humans abandon morality as the price of success. One by one humanity is stripped away from the human, and it leads to the fall.....”

“In my opinion, that is an interpretation created, so it can be easily digested by the masses. Not all relationships that existed between humans and demons were known to the world. In the end, the process doesn’t matter. They just need to bring about a result that fits the word, ‘ruination’.”

“You have a point. If the contract only says ‘ruination’, the word could be up for interpretation. If you put it that way, your argument does seem to have some merit.”

“Even if it is true, it has nothing to with us.”

“Right?”

It was the same for all the Keepers of the Prophecy. They didn’t care how they had acquired their power. It didn’t matter if their power was given to them by a magician using a forbidden technique or an evil magician aiming for their souls. If they could eliminate the Dragon Demon king worshippers from this world, they would willingly hold hands with the devil.

Leone spoke in exasperation.

“How bored were you? You studied about the Demon race to come up with this nonsense. Moreover, even if your theory is true, it wouldn’t explain the prophecy.”

“I don’t know why the Demon race wants the human souls in the first place, so I can’t explain that. However....”

“That information is already known.”

“Huh?”

“This is the problem with a non-mage like you. It isn’t as if you are great at Spirit Order either... Why don’t you go into a mountain to train? You should train as if your life is on the line.”

“If I could have gotten stronger doing that, I would have already become a legendary swordsman.”

“I thought you just didn’t put in the effort. You should look at Azell Zestringer. He was able to catch a Dragon after training in Spirit Order for half a year.”

“If everyone could do what he did, Dragons would have already gone extinct early on. Well, let’s stop talking about useless topics. So why do Demons collect human souls?”

“Do you know about the origin story of the Dragon Demon race?”

“They were born from the union of the dimwitted Dragons and the cunning Demons.”

“Yes. The answer is right in front of you. The Dragons wanted knowledge. What did the Demons want?”

“Mmm. They wanted the Dragon’s power?”

“As expected, you are dumb, brat Jares. Since you were spouting some plausible conjectures, for a moment, I thought you were smart. I was foolish for thinking that.”

“.....”

“The Demons desire substance. They thirst for the opportunity to be able to live in this world as true inhabitants of this world. This fundamental reason makes the Demons act in such an irrational manner.”

“In what way?”

“They hate the living, yet they thirst to live amongst the living. This thirst was the impetus for them to join with the Dragons to create the Dragon Demon race... Then they started working on obtaining human souls.”

“I understand the first part of your explanation, but you are losing me towards the end. What difference does it make for them to possess human souls? Will they be able to live their lives as humans?”

“That I do not know.”

“Hey.”

“I just know that Demons get some sort of satisfaction from gaining a human’s soul. If you want a more concrete answer, you’ll have to risk your life to deal with the Demon race. Or you can steal knowledge from the Black Magicians, who have gained some result from researching the Demons.”

“Why did you say steal?”

“For a magician, knowledge is life. Moreover, the Black Magicians have no problem throwing away morality and duty of being a human. That is why one has no choice, but to steal the information from them.”

“Hmmm.....”

Leone asked a question, while Jares thought about what had been said.

“What do you think about him?”

“He made us..... You aren’t talking about him. Do you mean Azell Zestringer?”

“Yes.”

“I have no idea. In the beginning, the evidence pointed him out to be the prophesied being. However, if what we learned from

Azell Zestringer is true, it isn't too hard for humans to obtain the power of a Dragon."

"You say it isn't difficult, but you aren't able to do it. Maybe you should just fall on your sword in shame."

"Hmmp. Anyways, there were other humans like Azell Zestringer before the Guardian Shadows were created. This is why our initial criteria for finding the prophesied being won't prove that he is a unique existence."

"Unfortunately, you are right. However, he is special."

"He is like a Demon."

"In what way?"

"We don't know his identity, and he is overflowing with knowledge of unknown origin. Moreover, all the knowledge he revealed was being treated as something sensitive in nature by the Dragon Demon king worshippers."

"Hmmm. When you put it like that, I do see the parallel."

"Do you think he is the person mentioned in the prophecy?"

"Yes."

"Have you completely made up your mind?"

"Not yet. However, the more I see of him... I feel a sense of longing."

"Me too. It is as if I've seen him somewhere before. It might be the fact that he looks almost identical to the portrait of Azell Karzark."

"That might be it. However, there is an echo of a longing in side me for him. It is as if I'm meeting a long lost family member."

"Hmm... Did you live so long that you've become crazy? Did you remember something about your family? "

"Unfortunately, I can only remember that my sister's death was

incredibly sad for me. Aside from that, I remember nothing...”

Leone let out a bitter laugh. He was sure he had a sister he had treasured. He would have given up his life to protect her... However, he had been helpless to save her as he watched her die.

The grudge he possessed allowed him to become the Guardian Shadow's Keeper of Prophecy. As a price for becoming one, he had lost all memories of her. He couldn't even remember her face.

The only thing left was the occasional sound of her laugh that tickled his ears. This sound was the only connection he had to his memories, and it allowed Leone to hold on to his humanity.

“I don't know what Balseru is thinking.”

“I'm not sure either. I've never been able to discern what Alpha is thinking....”

Balseru was the Keeper of the Prophecy, who went to seek out Azell. He was their leader, and he was given the code name Alpha. This didn't mean he was the first Keeper of Prophecy. The very first Alpha had perished, and Balseru smoothly assumed that position. He was considered to be unique even amongst the Keepers of the Prophecy.

Leone was supposed to go, but he had received a severe injury. Alpha had gone in his stead. He went to confirm an important fact. Alpha hadn't moved even when they had mobilized a Dragon to test Azell. So Leone wonder why Alpha insisted taking on this task. However, Leone predicted that the meeting between Alpha and Azell would be an important watershed moment.

“Maybe we are all... The end to our existence might be getting closer.”

“I hope you are right. Still, I don't think your expectations will come true.”

Jares grumbled.

Chapter 122 – Specters from the Past (2)

2

Azell was now completely acclimatized with the Dragon Weapon named Vitan's Chalice. He didn't feel any discomfort at the prospect of using the Vitan's Chalice in battle. He even sparred Kairen, who had become frustrated at his absence from the sparring sessions.

Leticia spoke.

"It was frightening and unbearable to see a man child, who's over 100 years old, throw a tantrum. Thankfully the nanny came back from his vacation."

"Ha ha ha. I thought you enjoyed it."

"I won't deny that fact, but that man doesn't need to know the extent of my enjoyment."

Leticia snorted.

Kairen sparred with Azell until he was exhausted, and he went away to wash himself.

From that point on, Leticia started to spar with Azell. Azell had focused his attention on Vitan's Chalice for a good amount of time, so he was a bit impatient at that moment.

The sword lightly exchanged blows with the spear as if they were probing each other. Then their exchanges kept increasing in speed. The speed had increased so much that a normal person wouldn't be able to follow what was occurring. Then they released their magical energy. A battle between Spirit Order and the Dragon Arts had started.

As they were exchanging mental waves in a remarkable manner, Leticia let out a sharp stab with her spear.

Pah-gahk!

When it looked as if her cross spear was about to clash against Azell's Dragon Sword, Azell accelerated as he tilted himself. He used his shoulder armor to hit the shaft of the spear. As the spear was thrown off its path, he stopped on a dime to do a roundhouse kick.

His attack had totally caught her by surprise, but Leticia remained calm. She jumped into the air as she avoided the kick. Her body spun in the air as she aimed for Azell's head with the part of her spear, which held no edge.

Instead of deflecting or dodging, he dashed towards her again. At the same time, his body blurred. She faced with two opponents coming at her from both sides. She couldn't differentiate between the clone and the real body.

"I was wondering when you'll use that... Are you planning on attacking in earnest?"

A white frigid energy rose up from Leticia's body. She knew Azell's clones possessed substance. This was why it was pointless to waste energy in figuring out which one was the real one. She'll just seal the movement of both of them!

Pah-ahhhhhhhng!

The cold air exploded forth, and the surrounding froze. Leticia was about to retreat backwards as she used a linked attack. However, she saw something unbelievable before she could do anything.

"...how did you do that?"

Azell had pierced through the cold air, and the tip of his sword was right in front of her nose. She had just caused the explosion of cold air, so she assumed she had bought a moment of reprieve. When she started to move, he took her by surprise. She had experienced all sorts of hardships through battle, yet she couldn't do anything against his attack.

Azell spoke as he put away his sword.

“You didn’t try to discern which was the real body. You were decisive, but you shouldn’t put too much trust in your area of effect attack. A tough opponent can just brute force his way through, and an opponent with good senses can read the flow of power to avoid it.”

“You still haven’t answered by question.”

“It was simple. I knew your Dragon Arts had the property of coldness. I just needed to change the property of my magical energy to match yours.”

This was the same as the insulation method he used against an opponent, who enjoyed using electric attack. He wrapped himself with magical energy, which had the property of coldness. An attack of this strength wouldn’t be able to harm him.

Leticia flinched in surprise when she heard Azell continue to speak.

“You shouldn’t use this method against high ranking magicians. You probably had a lot of fun using it against Spirit Order practitioners and the Dragon Arts practitioner.... Moreover, there are others out there that can change the properties of magical energy like me.”

Azell’s voice emanated from behind her. Soon, the Azell in front of her dissipated, and she was struck dumb by a realization.

“Incarnation.... I’ve heard about it, but now that I’ve experienced it for myself, it leaves me flabbergasted.”

Azell had pointed his sword in front of her face, yet it had only been the clone created using the ‘Dance of Shadow’. He had also used this method against Niberis before. His clone possessed the property of the element used by his opponent. While his clone conducted a surprise attack, he hid his real body in an attempt to find the next opportunity to attack.

Azell spoke.

“I guess not many people uses this technique anymore. Is this the same in the Plain of Darkness?”

“It holds true there to my knowledge. I wasn’t able to climb too high in their hierarchy, so I can’t be sure.....”

“Hmmm.”

Even during the Dragon Demon war, there were hardly anyone, who used the Incarnation technique. A much smaller pool of people were able to use it in a proficient manner. Aside from Azell, there had been only three people, who were able to use Incarnation in a proficient manner.

There was the alliance’s best technician and vertan knight Duke Croix Nidel. The rest were Almarick, who was one of the four Dragon Demon Generals, and...

Dragon Demon king Atein.

‘Well, it was a technique that was very discerning on who could use it.’

Aside from the difficulty of the technique, there were other criterias that determine which users could use the technique. Even if one was able to do the Incarnation, it didn’t mean the user was always stronger than the others.

Azell spoke.

“Anyways, now that I’ve fought you, it made me feel more confused.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Your Dragon Demon Qi is really... It similar to the one I know.”

“Didn’t you say your teacher was a Dragon Demon named Reshoo?”

“Yes. He was my fourth teacher.”

“You had a lot of teachers.”

“There were five in total. Well, it is a bit dubious to call that old man a teacher....”

Azell’s fourth teacher was Dragon Demon Reshoo. Reshoo’s status was a bit ambiguous, since he was neither an enemy nor an ally. Then there was Duke Croix Nidel. He was Azell’s fifth and last teacher.

Leticia asked a question.

“You said the Dragon Demon named Reshoo taught you how to handle the power of Dragons. What did you mean by that?”

“Is it my turn to receive questions from you?”

“If I don’t start getting some answers in return, it feels as if I’m sustaining too much of a loss.”

“I’ll acknowledge that. Mmm. Reshoo was a first generation Dragon Demon.”

“A first generation Dragon Demon.... Those who walk on this land without parents?”

“I guess some call them that. They possess peerless power when compared to the other Dragon Demons.”

From Azell’s memory, no one was more powerful than Reshoo in terms of Dragon Demon magic. If one was measuring only the quantity of Dragon Demon magic one possessed, even Dragon Demon king Atein was weaker than Reshoo. Reshoo’s use of power was almost identical to the Dragons, so he didn’t have to use techniques of the Dragon Arts. He could use his will to wield his power, and he was able to produce calamitous results.

“Isn’t he the type of being able to wield his power using just his sense?”

“He was. Well, when he acted as a teacher for me, he learned a lot of technique from me. Afterwards, he changed a lot, but his

fundamental characteristics remained the same.”

“Did he use a weapon?”

“No, he always insisted that his body was the best weapon for him.”

“Yes, the difference becomes more stark as you speak. From my memories, I’ve never seen my teacher use powerful Dragon Demon magic. He might have been strong, but he never revealed it to me. Moreover, he never wasted his power unnecessarily. For example, he gave me a drill where I had to receive drops of water....”

“You participated in a drill where you had to receive drops of water?”

“It is a training where I stab quickly with my spear. The blade of spear won’t disperse the falling drops of water, and my spear would receive the drops of water intact. This is only possible if one is able to finely control one’s magical energy.”

“.....”

“Why are you making such an expression?”

“No, it’s nothing.”

“Hmm. You said you learned how to control the power of Dragons. What does that entail?”

“It is as the words imply. Originally, humans do not possess Dragon Demon magic. Isn’t that right?”

“Of course.”

“When a human awakens to one’s magic, one develops a new sense and power. One has to through a lot of hardship to train it. Let us say one trains in the magical energy until it’s like controlling a limb. What if this existing power if changed into a completely different power?

What will happen?”

“Hmm.....”

Leticia spoke after thinking over his words for a moment.

“...your senses will become confused since it's used to handling normal magical energy.”

“That's right. This is the inevitable trap for those who gain Dragon Demon magic through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. On top of that, it isn't as if one's magical energy converts into Dragon Demon magic in an instantaneous manner. The properties of magical energy slowly takes on the properties of Dragon Demon magic. This adds to the difficulty. If one thinks of developing magical energy as growing a new limb, then the magical energy changing into Dragon Demon magic is like one's limb turning into something different and weird. Of course, the performance of this limb is better, but what if an extra joint, a finger or the range of motion appears....”

Even now Azell's magical energy had not changed entirely into Dragon Demon magic. From Azell's experience, it would take at least two more Dragon Slayer's Ritual to completely change his magical energy into Dragon Demon Magic. He would have to go through the process of completely processing the power of the Dragons.

“If one is sloppy in the process of gaining Dragon Demon magic, one's own senses could become out of joint. What would you do if that occurred?”

“I would try to expand my normal senses, and I'll put my effort into learning how to wield a new weapon.”

“It is as I've said before. You are very outstanding in terms of understanding techniques.”

“Don't treat me as if I'm your student. You are only a young human.”

“It was an innocent compliment. Anyways, that's the problem.”

When one obtains a new power, one had to maintain one's prior senses as one expanded control over the power. This allows one to be able take advantage of the merit of the new power as one became stronger. However...

“It isn't enough. The feel of the techniques has to be built back up from the bottom.”

When he obtained the Dragon Demon magic for the first time, Azell had used the Dragon Demon magic to increase the efficacy of his techniques.

For example, when he normally tried to make a flame sword, he coated his magical energy over the blade. This was done so his blade wouldn't lose its edge from the fire. Then he had to make sure a constant energy was provided as fuel for the flame. He had used a combination of these two magic conjuration to form the flame on the outside. However, after he acquired the Dragon Demon magic, he could directly create a flame over the sword.

“Reshoo asked me why I used such an idiotic method.”

When Reshoo saw the result of Azell's technique, he had a puzzled expression on his face. He asked why Azell hadn't created a flame that doesn't damage the edge of the sword.

“...it sounded ridiculous. What do you think about his idea?”

“From my point of view, he gave a logical response. Of course, it is possible to do that.”

“This is the difference between someone who was born with the Dragon Demon magic and a person who had acquired it.”

Would he really be able to create a flame that burned one's target, while the blade remained unburnt?

The users of magical energy thought about protecting the item before setting the item on fire. On the other hand, the users of Dragon Demon magic just made a flame that didn't burn selected targets.

It sounded ridiculous, but one could create this phenomena using just one's will. One could use Image Making to achieve the desired result.

“Reshoo taught me about my problems, so I had to rebuild my techniques from the ground up. While I was doing this, Reshoo learned as many systematized techniques he could.”

“Basically, it wasn't a one-sided relationship. Are you saying you guys were each other's teacher?”

“It was like that for Reshoo and the old man, who was my fifth teacher.”

Azell smiled as he reminisced over the past.

His fifth teacher was Duke Croix Nidel. At the time, he was known as the living encyclopedia in the world of Spirit Order. He possessed expansive knowledge, and at the same time, he had the skill to utilize all the techniques. At the time, Azell had been learning any techniques he could scrounge up. When Azell met him, he was able to find learn about the frightening power of learning techniques, while having a clear-cut root to his skills.

As recompense, Azell taught him about handling Dragon Demon magic. Croix Nidel was advanced in age, so he had been very set in his ways. However, he was able to gain enlightenment. He even came up with the technique where one was able to use multiple Dragon Demon weapons at the same time. It had been something only the Dragon Demon king Atein could do up until that point.

Azell didn't give much details on Croix Nidel to Leticia. Still, she was surprised just from the fact that he had been a better technician than Azell.

“They are quite interesting figures. Could you perhaps tell me what the Dragon Demon named Reshoo looked like?”

Chapter 123 – Specters from the Past (3)

“They are quite interesting figures. Could you perhaps tell me about what the Dragon Demon named Reshoo looked like?”

“His hair color was very unique. It was a metallic blue color.”

“It isn’t a color that appears normally amongst humans. No, it is hard to find such coloring even amongst the Dragon Demons.....”

“What about your teacher?”

“He has black hair.”

“He definitely isn’t the one from my memories. Still, the more I see of your Dragon Arts it reminds me of Reshoo. This also applies to your training method..”

“Mmm?”

“I’m talking about the training method where one receives the drops of water. I taught Reshoo that drill. Of course, I told Reshoo to do it with his kicks.”

“What an interesting coincidence.”

“Well, it is a training method easily devised by anyone. I guess it can happen.”

Moreover, Reshoo could have taught the drill to someone else, while Azell was asleep. Maybe Leticia’s teacher learned it from Reshoo.

Still, Azell couldn’t stop thinking about it. Leticia’s martial arts, the way she used her Dragon arts and the basic philosophy she followed was almost identical to the last time he saw Reshoo. If she was completely unrelated to him, she wouldn’t make him have such a visceral reaction.

‘Of course, it could just be a coincidence....’

Azell let out a bitter laugh. He was obsessing over this problem,

because he wanted to meet Reshoo if he was still alive. Reshoo was a Dragon Demon, who hadn't paid attention to the Dragon Demon war. If one factored in the fact that he was a first generation Dragon Demon, he could still be alive. Azell wanted to meet him.

Azell had been thrown into the future by himself. It was a span of 220 years. Of course, he would obsess over someone, who had lived in the same era as him.

3

Azell's party was moving at high speed.

It had been 10 days since he acquired the White Dragon armor. The party followed the guide's instruction, and they travelled in a straight line for 400 kilometers. They were able to find another ruin left behind by Carlos. At this point, Azell's emotions was so complicated it was beyond expression as he looked Yuren.

"After the White Dragon armor, I expected to find some kind of amazing magical instrument.... It's a skill manual."

The item preserved in this ruin was a form of training method. Carlos' thought manifestation gave an explanation.

'The old man Nidel gave this to me for safekeeping instead of leaving behind a will. He said you didn't wake up before his death, so he said he had won. He wants you to come to his grave later, and he wants you to declare yourself the loser.'

...at that moment, it felt as if Azell's blood was flowing backwards. Unfortunately, he didn't have a place to vent his anger.

'That old man is really....!'

The relationship of Azell and Croix Nidel could be described as them being each other's teacher. Their first meeting occurred when they were at a drinking party. As soon as they met, they started speaking words in an attempt to annoy the other. It escalated into them exchanging blows with their swords. After the end of the fight, they acknowledged each other. They had given

recognition to each other for their skills, but they hadn't developed a close relationship. They didn't become comrades in arms.

Croix was the one, who started it. On the next day, he came looking for Azell, and he showed off a technique in front of Azell. Croix sneered as he spoke to Azell.

'You are gifted for someone so young, but I bet you can't do this. You are a valuable talent of the alliance force, so if you bow down to me, I might teach you this technique.'

Azell had become angry. He had lived through all sorts of hardship, and he had learned all kinds of techniques from his four teachers. These were skills that couldn't be replicated by others. He immediately showed off a technique as a counterattack.

'I acknowledge that your techniques are incredible. However, the times are changing, old man. If we are talking about the latest techniques of Spirit Order, it should be of this caliber. If I learn such an old technique, it'll be a net loss for me. However, I have respect for someone that still fights by dragging along his old body. I'll accept the unequal exchange as a sign of respect for you. Shall I teach you what I just did?'

...at that point, the two of them had become angry again. Another fight was inevitable.

Afterwards, the two of them tried to outdo each other using all of their might. Everyday they kept showing off techniques that would have made the eyes of normal Spirit Order practitioners spin. They also argued about martial arts and tactics in battle. It was a petty battle for one's pride, but everyone was flabbergasted when the two of them rapidly increased their skill through these fights.

When the Dragon Demon war ended, Azell had won. At the time, they had pretty much bottomed out on what they could show each other, yet Azell had been able to get the final word by teaching Croix for the last time. His nose had been in the air, since he had

won.

However, he never expected such a counterattack after 220 years.

‘Shit! That old man didn’t grow up even at his death bed! Moreover, this is cheating! He didn’t make this by himself!’

He couldn’t pay back the old man back for sucker punching him like this!

Unlike what he was feeling.... The skill manual possessed a very surprising content.

“I never expected such a method could be used to produce Dragon Demon qi.”

Azell had explained how to produce Dragon Demon qi to Kairen before.

It was something that arose from oneself through Spirit Order, Dragon Arts or magic rituals. Humans and Dragon Majins could accelerate this process through the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.

There were two ways to shorten this process.

First, one could receive help from other Dragon Demons or Dragon Majin, who already possessed Dragon Demon qi. This helper had to sacrifice one’s own power by pushing it into a person to create Dragon Demon qi.

The second way was to use the corpse of a Dragon. There was a lot of power stored within the corpse of a Dragon. One could bring out this power to accelerate the production of Dragon Demon qi.

The manual was talking about a variation of the first method.

“This training method is a win-win proposition.”

Originally, the high ranking Spirit Order practitioner or magician, who possessed Dragon Demon magic, had to sacrifice their power by pouring it into a person. However, if he followed the training method in the manual, both sides would benefit.

Carlos had constructed a magical circle, and this device would provide the magical energy. This process was used alongside Dragon Demon qi, and it strengthened the Dragon Demon magic. The participants continuously went through a cycle of acceleration, circulation and amplification.

The participants would receive more output of magical energy compared to the amount they put in. Moreover, the person without the Dragon Demon magic could gradually acquire it.

“Anyone could come up with this idea, but I would have never expected it to be such a complete product. Moreover, this method increases the Dragon Demon magic by such a large quantity.”

This training method was a fusion of Spirit Order and magic. Croix Nidel probably came up with the idea, and Carlos took steps to flesh it out. The sensitive part of the process would have needed to have gone through countless experiments to iron out the kinks.

Azell immediately gathered his party members, and he tried out the training method. He brought out the Sword that Splits the Heavens and the Vitan’s Chalice. He recruited Laura to participate alongside the two Dragon Weapons and the result was....

Everyone became surprised at the efficacy of the method.

“...this is incredible.”

Azell was astonished. The efficacy of the training method increased depending on the participants. Aside from Yuren, everyone either possessed Dragon Demon qi or they were born with natural Dragon Demon magic.

‘At this pace, I might be able to summon the Sword that Splits the Sky without an aid. I won’t have to summon it through the Dragon sword.’

It even accelerated his digestion of the Dragon’s power he took using the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.

Laura spoke.

“It seems I have the least to gain here.”

She barely gained anything from this training method. In truth, the vessel that holds her power within her body was almost complete. She would continue to grow in terms of becoming more proficient in technical aspects of being a magician, but she shouldn't expect her Dragon Demon magic to grow much.

This was the same for Kairen. This training method could only accelerate the process of him making his own Dragon weapon..

Azell spoke.

“I don't think so.”

“Why?”

“You'll be able to make your own Dragon weapon.”

“.....”

Laura's expression turned a bit peculiar. Azell asked in puzzlement.

“What's wrong?”

“...it is nothing. I just never thought about it.”

“Huh?”

“I've always only thought about becoming the inheritor of the Vitain's Chalice.....”

If one became the heir of Aunsaurus, one had to inherit the Vitan's Chalice. This was why she hadn't even had the choice of making a Dragon weapon through putting in her own effort and time.

Laura mumbled to herself in a dumbfounded manner.

“I see. I can make my own Dragon weapon...”

It was an obvious truth, so he found it amusing that she had just

realized it.

Laura burst into laughter.

Azell grinned as he asked her a question.

“I can’t believe you hadn’t thought about that. Did you never get to make decisions for yourself?”

“Yes.”

“...not at all?”

“If I look hard enough, I could find minor decisions I had made before on my own. However, all the big decisions were made by my family.”

Laura hadn’t been ordered to look for it, yet she had looked through the old records during her own free time. She also chose to look up and speak to the nameless elder. She had made her own decisions in those instances.

Still, even as she had those thoughts, she knew her freedom of choice had been within the restrictions placed on her by her family. She wasn’t told what she could do during her free time, but she was told which activities were forbidden to her.

“If I think about it, the only real choice I made in my life was to follow you, Azell Zestringer.”

“.....”

“You are making a strange expression.”

“What?”

Laura had spoken those words as she tilted her head. Azell furrowed his brows.

Laura started to speak again.

“I know I’m putting you in a tough spot. I’m not sure why you are feeling that way. Did something within my story make you uncomfortable?”

“...is that how I looked to you?”

“Yes.”

“I see.”

Azell let out a bitter laugh. If anyone else other than Laura had seen his expression, they would have been able to identify the expression on his face. Azell had been feeling pity towards her.

‘She can’t even identify.... I guess she really did only live her life as a tool.’

As time passed, he didn’t know how he should treat her. It made him confused.

Moreover, Laura wasn’t the only one where he didn’t know how he should act.

4

“Wouldn’t it be better if you just followed us out in the open? I can rent you a room.”

Azell had approached a man camping 100 meters away from the inn where Azell’s party was staying. The man wasn’t asleep. He was sitting in front of the campfire as he ate the soup he had made. He was the Guardian Shadow’s Keeper of Prophecy.

After their first meeting, Balseru kept a fixed distance away from Azell’s party as he followed them. Unlike the other Guardian Shadows, he didn’t mask his presence. However, when he didn’t move, his presence disappeared like a ghost. So there were times when Azell almost lost track of him.

Balseru spoke.

“Thank you for the suggestion, but I’ll have to decline.”

“Why? Are you afraid I’ll stab you in the back?”

“No. I don’t want to stab you in the back.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“If I’m close, I’ll be able to see the members of your party. It’ll be hard for me to suppress my killing intent. I know myself too well”

“.....”

He spoke those words, but Balseru’s expression and voice didn’t show any signs of emotion. His lack of emotions was almost at the level of Laura, and it felt as if there was a big gulf between them.

Suddenly, Balseru spoke.

“Hmm. I have to thank you for giving us the information. We are putting it to good use.”

“Have you destroyed some of the way-points for the Road of Emptiness?”

“Currently, we destroyed two locations. My comrades will probably attack the rest in between their travels.”

Azell and Kairen told Balseru about the Road of Emptiness. The Guardian Shadows were unreliable as messengers, but this wasn’t true for the Keepers of the Prophecy. Balseru contacted the Keepers of the Prophecy scattered all over the continent, and they confirmed if Laura’s information was true. Then they started their attack.

Azell wondered out loud.

“You guys were only able to take down two? I thought you guys are able to swiftly exchange information....”

“Still, there is a limit on how fast we can move. You have already seen this, but there are some Keepers of Prophecy, who aren’t that good in a fight.”

“Don’t you guys have the members of the Guardian Shadows? Why don’t you ask them for cooperation? Are you perhaps trying to prevent them from finding out about the Keepers of the Prophecy....”

“That isn’t it. We live different lives from them. They are in a

delicate situation.”

“What do you mean by that?”

Chapter 124 – Specters from the Past (4)

“What do you mean?”

“They are living their lives as members of society, so there are cases where we can’t mobilize some of our members. For example, what happens if there was an uprising of monsters in a certain region, and it required the member to take care of the region for an extended amount of time?”

“Mmmm.....”

This truth could be discerned by looking at Kairen and Beorein. The Guardian Shadows had a preference for picking members, who had influence over society. In terms of martial prowess, they didn’t need much help, but they needed members, who could carry out their work as members of society.

“In recent days, everyone is tied down in taking care of their own responsibilities. Anyways, we are doing our best.”

“I see. So why do you keep following me? Are you trying to confirm that I am the person from the prophecy?”

“That is one of them.”

“So that isn’t your only aim. What other goals do you have?”

“If Reygus does show up, I’m pretty sure he will appear in front of you. I look forward to it.”

“You look forward to it?”

Azell furrowed his brows. If it was as Balseru had said last time, the Keepers of Prophecy had fought with Reygus’ Undead form, and they had been crushed. Yet Balseru was looking forward to it?

“Will you be able to defeat Reygus’ Undead form? If not, are you planning on fighting Reygus with us as a united front?”

“Since he is an Undead, I’ll be able to take care of him by myself.”

“.....”

Azell stared at Balseru. Something really bothered Azell about him. He knew the other man was a Spirit Order Practitioner, but Azell couldn't read the depth of his power.

Normally, he would consider such a person to be formidable. However, Azell couldn't make that call yet. He had a weird feeling about Balseru.

Balseru spoke.

“However... Yes. If there are others aside from the Undead, it might be hard for me to defeat them. In such a situation, I would like to work with your party. At the very least, when we are fighting the Dragon Demon king worshippers, we can be sure that we are allies.”

“Let us do that. Still, our movements haven't been revealed to our enemies yet. Maybe....”

“If you are thinking about the possibility of me leading the enemies to you, I won't. I don't do such acts.”

“Hmm.”

“I've shown myself the least amongst the Keepers of the Prophecy. They probably don't even know what my code name is.”

“You codename? Now that I think about it you guys use the ancient alphabet like Delta and Theta. What is your code name?”

Alpha, Beta, Delta, Gamma, Epsilon, Zeta, Eta, Theta, Iota, Kappa, Lambda, Mu, Nu, Xi, Omicron, Pi, Rho, Sigma, Tau, Upsilon, Phi, Chi, Psi and Omega.

The Keepers of the Prophecy used the 24 ancient alphabets, which existed before the legend of Babel, as their code names. It was also letters frequently used by magicians when they conducted a magic ritual.

Balseru answered.

“I’m Alpha.”

“If you are Alpha, you are the first letter in the ancient alphabet. Is your code name related to seniority?”

“Yes.”

“Are you allowed to just give out such answers like this?”

“We decided we could tell you a certain amount of information.”

“I’m thankful that you hold me in such high regards. So you are the first amongst the Keepers of the Prophecy.... Doesn’t that contradict with your previous story?”

“Which story?”

“You said you quit being a knight around 50 years ago. If you became a Keeper of the Prophecy at that point in time, you became one during the Great Darkness. Doesn’t that mean you became one much later than Leone?”

“Correct.”

“Then your story doesn’t match.”

“I inherited the code name when the original Alpha died. My memory of that person is fuzzy, but I think he was my uncle.”

“You think..... What do you mean by that?”

“I don’t remember much from before I became a Keeper of the Prophecy. It might be the fact that my body had suffered through death. I believe it is the cost for being revived as a Keeper of the Prophecy.”

“Mmmm?”

“It seems Leone hadn’t discussed this with you. All the Keepers of Prophecy used to be humans. We are existences that were raised from the dead..”

“You guys were raised from the dead? Do you really want me to believe such nonsense?”

“I understand it sounds preposterous. Still, is it so absurd when one takes in the fact that we don’t age?”

“Mmmm.....”

“The Dragon Demon king is a murderer, and we were killed while holding a grudge against him. At the moment of our deaths, the nucleus of the magic making up the Guardian Shadows made contact with us. We were revived.... Or that is what we think happened. We were revived from death by some means or other.”

“Some means or other.... Aren’t you guys being a little bit too loose on the facts?”

“Those of us, who were originally magicians, are divided in opinion. We aren’t able to come to a consensus no matter what. The non-magicians amongst us just accept the situation as is. In the end, the only thing that is important to us is the slaughter of Dragon Demon king worshippers. We don’t care about anything else.”

“Hah.....”

A forced laugh leaked out of Azell. This guy was really an absurd bastard. He kept revealing incredible facts, yet he was serene. It was as if he was talking to a neighbor about an unimportant matters.

“You said you lost your memories?”

“Yes, I have no memories of my previous life. We only know about the reason why we are doing these tasks.”

“Aren’t you, at the very least, suspicious?”

“About what?”

“Aren’t you suspicious of that fact that someone might have manipulated all of you?”

They had no memories of their past. They had no idea, who had made them that way. They didn’t even know what criteria allowed

them to become Keepers of the Prophecy.

The were completely ignorant of their own situation, yet they followed the truths that came to them on an instinctual level. They had become the embodiments of revenge. They possessed the body of a human, yet they had given up being humans. They devoted themselves to eradicating the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

“...aren’t you suspicious about the possibility that this is all a fabrication made through magic?”

“I never thought about it.”

“.....”

“Your expression is asking how I can be so foolish.”

“You speak as if you can see me.”

“I can see you.”

“Even though you have your eyes closed?”

“I’m not blind. Even if my eyes are closed, it doesn’t interfere with my sight. Anyways, that is how it is. When we became the Keepers of the Prophecy, we were given an offer by an unknown being, and we made a choice. We remember making our choice, so we have no doubt.”

“Is that really enough?”

“Yes. Do you want us to become suspicious of the process? Wouldn’t that in turn make us deny our own existence? I have no desire to do so.”

“Are you afraid of doing so?”

“No. I just... I believe in the evidence provided by my hatred.”

“Hatred?”

“Funnily enough, I can’t feel anything. This conversation I am having with you feels like a daydream.”

However, when he was in front of the Dragon Demon king

worshippers, he could feel that he was still alive. The hatred he had for them burned. It awoke him to the fact that he was still alive and breathing in this world.

Azell now identified the madness he had felt when he saw Leone. These people really had lost everything. The elements that used to make up the identity of these people were all snatched away by the Dragon Demon king worshippers. The only thing left behind were empty dolls that were driven by hatred.

‘Who made this system?’

The curiosity he felt for this truth was almost unbearable. How much enmity did the creator of the Guardian Shadows have that he went down this ruthless road?

Balseru spoke.

“This is my warning to you, sir Azell. Reygus will come looking for you.”

“How do you know this? According to Laura....”

“There is someone amongst them that has the ability to find you. At the very least, we know that fact.”

“You speak as if you are a soothsayer.”

“I’m something akin to that.”

“What?”

When Azell became surprised, Balseru answered in a calm manner.

“Amongst the 24 Keepers of the Prophecy, only two of us has a fixed role. Alpha and Omega. The name has nothing to do with when we became a Keeper of the Prophecy. The one named Omega can catch a glimpse of what the Plain of Darkness is doing. They keep track of their members through the being, who resides in the Great Darkness. We are able to learn about what power they possess and what they are going to do....”

“Basically, you are using their information network against them?”

“It isn’t as clear cut as you make it out to be. In truth, it isn’t that helpful. We don’t know the content or the timing of the information we will receive. However, once we learn of an information, we are sure of its veracity.”

“I always have this thought....”

Azell was astonished.

“I can’t tell if you guys are amazing or extremely poorly run.”

“The world is an inconvenient place where there isn’t a clear cut answer.”

Balseru answered in a disinterested manner.

As soon as Azell walked away, Balseru spoke as he looked between the trees.

“You should come out now, Omega.”

“.....”

“He is far away enough.”

“...still, I’ll be discovered if I’m not careful.”

Soon, a voice of a young girl could be heard. Accompanying a rustling sound, a girl appeared from between the trees and bushes.

If Azell saw this sight, he would have been shocked. She had been so close, yet she had been able to evade Azell’s senses.

The girl looked to be 15 or 16 years old. From her appearance, she didn’t look too special. Since she had been hiding in the bushes, she was dirty. Her hair was tied in twin tails, and her hair was disheveled. She had a plain looking face with freckles.

The only thing unusual about her was her green eyes. She was looking straight at Balseru’s face, yet her eyes were out of focus. It was as if she couldn’t see....

Moreover, her sense of presence was absent like Balseru. It was understandable to see why Azell failed to notice her.

Balseru spoke as he filled a bowl with soup.

“Does it matter if he finds out about you? At the very least, we aren’t enemies with him right now.”

“Still, he really hates us.”

“That is true.”

“I don’t like being hated. At the very least, I don’t want him to look at me like that. I’ll decline.”

“Is it because he might be the person from the prophecy?”

“Yes.”

Omega took the bowl of soup from Balseru as she nodded her head. Omega’s eyes were out of focus, so it looked as if she was looking into the empty air. However, she had no problem receiving the bowl.

“If he is the person from the prophecy.... I have to give my everything to him. I don’t want to do something like that to someone that hates me.”

“I think every one of us are already hated by him.”

“That is why I won’t show myself until it is necessary. Unlike you, I don’t move in a herd with the other Keepers of the Prophecy. I don’t want him to hate me as an individual.”

Omega drank the soup after she said those words.

Balseru spoke.

“You still cling to your romantic ideals.”

“Unlike you, I even lost my name.”

Omega calmly spoke about her loss. It didn’t matter what order she joined as the Keeper of the Prophecy. She was given the last codename. Of course, she didn’t remember her past, but she also

didn't remember her name.

Balseru spoke.

“Well, you'll find out about it soon enough.”

“How do you know this?”

“I just have a hunch.”

“You are speaking as if you are a soothsayer.”

“I don't know about anything else, but my hunches are almost always correct. It has been so for 50 years, so you can put some trust in it.”

“Is that why you gathered everyone?”

“Yes.”

Balseru nodded his head. This was the end to the conversation between the two. Within the silence, it was as if the two assimilated into the landscape. Their presence were buried within the stillness.

Chapter 125 – Specters from the Past (5)

5

The Plain of Darkness was large. It was a land of demons unsullied by the hands of humans. Within this vast piece of land, the Dragon Demon king worshippers had gathered around the Dragon Demon palace left behind by Atein. They used the castle as base as they expanded outwards. They had used humans slaves to build buildings, and now there was a small kingdom within these lands.

This place was a frozen land. Unless there was a good reason to live here like them, no one would live in such an infertile land. No one would want to build a civilization here. Everything was frozen year round, and when there was a blizzard, even those with superhuman powers declined to travel far.

Hoo-oooooooooh.....

The snow was coming down. If one looked out into the Plain of Darkness, an incredible amount of snow had fallen. It made one's jaw fall wide open. If someone tried to walk through this, the person would become a snowman within dozen steps.

However, there was someone walking through the snow right now.

It was an odd sight. The person buried under the one meter of snow wasn't human. A being that looked like a pile of snow was plowing forward.

-You are cute, Reygus.

There was a faint illusion-like figure floating around the large pile of snow. The silhouette of a person within the falling snow made the figure look like an ice fairy.

Reygus, who had become a pile of snow, gave a reply.

<Cute? What about me is cute?>

-The fact that you don't know you are cute makes you more cute. I think you became cuter in death. If I wasn't married to the king, I probably would have wanted to be in your embrace. Alas, it is a dream that can never be fulfilled. Too bad.

<Your thoughts has become more unfathomable after death, Queen Kayalia.>

-Mmm. I thought about it for a long time, but I want you to drop the formality. Don't call me by my title as queen. I've been dead for a very long time, so I don't want to be called by my title as queen.

The white silhouette chortled as she laughed. If one looked at the figure bobbing up and down in the snow, one would see a 14 or 15 year old girl in human standards. However, she had white blonde hair that looked to have been melted out from the snow, and one could see a boulder-gray colored horn protruding from between her hair. Her ears were long, and the back of her hand had a slate gray colored Dragon Demon stone. It was the same color as her eyes.

Reygus brushed the snow away from his face as he spoke.

<Then what do you want me to call you by?>

-Just call me Kayalia. In exchange, I'll call you oppa. What do you say?

<It is such an attractive offer that I won't be able to say no to your request. All right, Kayalia.>

-Yes, Reygus oppa.

<Oh, that has a beautiful ring to it. Still, you really do speak a lot for a dead person. This is especially true compared to when you were alive.>

-Your guess is as good as mine as to why. Anyways, you are the

only one that can see and hear me. The best way to drive away loneliness is to talk.

<Couldn't you choose to speak to others even if it isn't me?>

-I have to use those opportunities sparingly. If possible, I have to keep my existence a secret. That is why I have to think hard on who I can converse with.

<It is coming into sight.>

Suddenly, Reygus spoke. He could see the majestic sight of the Dragon Demon castle across the hill.

Kayalia had been one of queens married to the Dragon Demon king Atein 220 years ago. She looked at the dim figure of the Dragon Demon castle as she asked a question.

-Is that place similar to the towns we saw along the way?

<It is worse.>

-I see. Aincera unni was always a strict person. She has become much more rigid in her ways, so I can see why things are like this under her rule.

<You are still calling her unni?>

-Of course. She hates it.

<You are still quite twisted. The fact that you haven't changed even in your death is a good thing.>

-The fact that oppa can say such words makes you sound more twisted than me. Anyways, we fought to create a really boring world. The king had wanted this, and I wonder if I automatically agreed to it just because he wanted it.

<Please don't speak such words in places where others can hear you. Many people within the castle worship him as if he was a god.>

-A god... I'm not thrilled about that either. Well, I always did

hate all of them. Now that I have no responsibility I can be free to show my disdain towards them.

Kayalia laughed like a immature human girl.

For a while, Reygus had left the Dragon Demon castle, and he had toured the Plain of Darkness. He had wanted to see how much the world had changed, but his real goal was to find Kayalia, who was stuck to him now. Atein had prepared a contingency plan for her too.

The Plain of Darkness had been isolated from the world 220 years ago. It was a microcosm of the world they had wanted to create through the Dragon Demon war. The Dragon Demons ranked at the top, the Dragon Majin was placed at the middle, and the humans were placed at the bottom.

The atmosphere around such a society wasn't anything too special. The religious zealots had made a deep impression on the society, and the human societies were seen as replaceable spare parts.

No, in truth, everything had become worse. Atein had become deified, and the zealots had created an excessively static society. As time passed, an irrational madness was being added to the mix, and the members of the society didn't resist against it. They silently conformed to it.

<Everything was always the same. We all despaired at that fact.>

-In truth, I thought it sounded like a pipe dream even in the past... First, the Dragon Demon race are in the wrong right now. They took only the parts they liked about the king's ideals, and they made their own extreme interpretations.

Kayalia knew the entirety of Atein's plan, since she closely aided Atein. She understood him. This was why she knew that the system adopted by the current Plain of Darkness was far from what Atein's plan intended. She sighed at this fact.

‘When one makes a group, it is the nature of life to divide the group based on their merits and demerits. The Dragon Demons are clearly superior to the humans as a specie. It is logical to put them in the ruling class. This would control the ambitions of the Dragon Demons, since they would have to carry out an increasing load of tasks to maintain the society. This in turn would develop respect for them from the members of the society. In this society, humans will all be considered to be equal. They won’t have to go through the pains of dealing with differences in station, wealth or physical stature. There would be no reason why humans would look down on other humans.’

...this was the basic outline of Atein’s plan. At a glance, the society built within the Plain of Darkness looked similar to his plan. However, it was completely different once one saw the details.

In the current Plain of Darkness, the Dragon Demons held the same position as human nobles. They held most of the power, and they considered humans to be of low rank. Humans were considered to be inferior to them. Even worse, the Dragon Demons further divided themselves based on bloodlines and origin....

In doing so, they were acting in the same way as the humans.

Atein hadn’t chosen the ‘ruling class’ for this purpose. The only part that coincided with the original plan was the fact that they were running the society. Still, now that she thought about it, the ‘ruling class consisting of the Dragon Demon race’ was an illusion that couldn’t exist in the real world.

-I’m curious about something, oppa.

<What is it?>

-During the war, didn’t we believe this was the answer that would eradicate sadness from this world?

<We did.>

When Kayalia talked about the ‘boring world’, she was talking about societal structure of the Plain of Darkness. It was devised as an answer to Atein’s plan for an ideal society. It was also the result of his followers interpreting his words as they pleased. Atein and the Dragon Demon Generals had thought this rank structure would eradicate all sadness and tragedy from this world.

Had they been wrong?

Kayalia sat on Reygus’ shoulder as she mimed putting her chin on her hands.

-Do you think things would have been different if the king won and he had a direct hand in ruling them?

<I’m not sure. In the end, if the king was able realize his goal, I don’t think it would have turned out all too differently.>

-Do you think he would have acknowledged his failure?

<‘I thought I knew everything about the humans, yet I didn’t know anything about them. This is why I will try to learn about them from now on.’ The king spoke those words.>

-He was so grand.

<Mmm?>

-Every work he undertook was incredibly large in scale. He achieved great achievements, yet his mistakes were big too. He also caused a lot of harm... This was why I thought he was a bit cute.

<...I’m not sure how you can come to such a conclusion..>

-It’s all right. You can continue to not understand me. This is why oppa is a cute person.

<.....>

Reygus brushed off the snow on his head as he asked the question.

<I have a question I want to ask you.>

-What is it?

<How did you die?>

-Mmm? I lost in a fight. Oppa died before me, so why are you speaking to me in such a tone?

<Queen Aincera told me about it. While they escaped from the Dragon Horn fortress, you went missing along the way. What happened?>

-Jeez. That unni is really...

Kayalia pouted. She threw her body into the air as she spoke.

-I just hated everything.

<You hated everything?>

-I wanted to quit everything. I was originally a human. At one time, I thought the human race was the worst, but it was true that there were some I liked amongst them.

Kayalia's eyes unfocused as she looked towards her past. She was Atein's consort, but she had also been one of his disciples. This was why she was a very special existence amongst the entirety of the Dragon Demon king's army.

-I continued to do work I hated, because of my station. We fought to erase the sadness from this world, but it looked as if we were causing more people to cry. Azell oppa told me that.

<Azell oppa? Are you perhaps talking about Azell Karzark?>

Reygus was surprised as he looked at Kayalia.

-That's right. He didn't want me to call him ahjussi, so I call him oppa.

<You called him that?>

-I wasn't able to call him that in front of him, but that is what I called him inside my heart. Azell oppa. The fact that I had to fight a life and death battle with him made me very sad.

<Huh-uh. I didn't know you two had such a relationship.>

-No one knew about it.

<Hmm. I never knew you had a hidden story such as this. It is quite interesting.>

-A woman is supposed to have a lot of secrets.

<I would like to hear the long version of it later. All right. What did he say?>

-He asked me how high I had stacked the mountain of corpses with my hands. He asked me if I knowingly did what I did.

<It is something we commonly hear.>

-Isn't it? If it was anyone else, I would have ignored it. However, when that oppa said those words, it stabbed right through my heart. He had the eyes of a real hero. He looked like someone, who had immediately ran forward to save the world that had been broken by us. At that moment, I realized I shouldn't continue to do what I hate when I could see the result of my actions.

Kayalia continued to float in the air as she gathered her knees to herself. She spun in the air as snowflakes blew around her.

<Did you lose on purpose?>

-I didn't lose on purpose.

<Are you sure?>

-Jeez, oppa. You were defeated by him too, so why are you asking such a question?

<Mmm. Weren't you supposed to be special?>

-At the time, Azell oppa was ridiculously strong. Even the king lost in a bout with him. I didn't lose on purpose.

<I'm a bit suspicious about that point.>

-You didn't see the true power of Azell oppa. After you died, he continued to grow at a frightening pace.

<I admit his growth speed was extraordinary. Well, all right. Let's set that aside.... You didn't have to go missing and die by yourself, right?>

-You speak the truth. However, our defeated army were basically in a trance. It was as if everyone had gone half-mad according to the the words they spoke. I became annoyed when I heard them, so I got out of there. Then I died. If I look back on it, it was such a dumb way to die... I do regret it a little bit. I've thought about it, and I should have come to this place. I should have exited after I secured my safety. However, at the time, I didn't have the presence of mind to.... It was only when I died that I came to my sense, and I heard the king's will.

<So that is how you were able to jump 220 years like me. However, why have you taken on such a form?>

-I didn't want to become an Undead. I told him I would hate to become a Skeleton. I threw a tantrum saying he should respect a girl's wish.

<...that sounds absurd, but at the same time, it is so like you.>

-He wanted to overwork me even after death. Shouldn't I be able get my way in such matters?

The sound of air exiting Reygus' skull could be heard. It seemed he couldn't break the habit of laughing as if he was still alive.

Suddenly, Kayalia asked a question.

-Do you really think Azell oppa is alive?

<Maybe.>

-How could this be?

<I know. I have circumstantial evidences, but I am having a hard time confirming it.>

-If you are planning on meeting him, please arrange it so I can talk to him. I'll go meet him looking very beautiful.

<I hope you aren't planning on telling me you won't lending me your power when that time comes.>

-I'll think about it.

<...uh-ee?>

-I'm already dead. I'm free from all obligations. I can choose to help or not. Even the king gave me leave to do what I want.

<That hopeless guy.....>

Reygus grumbled. Kayalia put her face next to his as she spoke.

-So when are you going to meet him to confirm it is him?

<Since he exited the reaches of the information network of the Plain of Darkness, I had to use my own method. I'll be able to find his whereabouts soon.>

-I look forward to it. Ah, what face should I put on when I meet him?

<...I don't care if you don't help me, but please don't betray me. I'll be wounded.>

-I'll see how oppa acts.

Kayalia stuck out her tongue, and she disappeared as if she melted into the thin air.

Chapter 126 – Suspicious Movements (1)

1

Their destination, which was the Avantan forest, was a long distance off, so the party wasn't in a hurry. It wasn't a destination they could reach in a short amount of time no matter how fast they traveled.

Yuren spoke.

“The guide accurately told us about the other locations.”

“At this point in time, what seemed impossible seems possible now....”

Azell's expression indicated that he was aware that he was talking about something far-fetched. Yuren grinned.

“Are you talking about the possibility of the guide being Carlos?”

“...yes.”

“I'm having the same exact thought right now. The Dragon Demon General Reygus presumed that Carlos is still alive. Maybe, Carlos tricked the world to avoid public attention. What if he is hiding somewhere? On top of that, he might be sending his will to his descendant using magic.”

Azell's expression turned complicated. Carlos was his closest and dearest friend. He had prepared all kinds of contingency plans for Azell's eventual awakening, which would have happened after well after his death.

The possibility of him being alive evoked complicated thoughts in Azell's mind. If he thought about it rationally, there was no way he was alive. However, what if he was alive?

‘It isn't impossible. That is the scary part.’

If it was Carlos, it might be possible.

As a general concept, he thought about the possibility of Carlos becoming an Undead. He might have predicted the revival of Atein. He could have turned himself into an Undead to wait for Azell eventual awakening.

However, there was another possibility that could have been pursued. It was something that only Azell knew about.

‘If he went in hibernation like me.....’

At the latter stage of his life, what if Carlos put himself into a sleep induced by magic? What if he passed the time by imitating the slumber of a Dragon?

He already experimented the method through Azell. Would it really have been impossible to think that Carlos used the same procedure on himself?

‘He might be using Yuren to lead me to him. If it’s him, it is possible.’

If he was still alive... No, it didn’t matter what method he used. He could be a dead corpse living on as an Undead... Azell wanted to meet him at all costs. He had a mountainous amount of topics he wanted discuss with Carlos.

When he thought about this possibility, he thought about the blame he had place on Carlos in the beginning. Why wasn’t he awoken at an earlier date? Why was the County of Karzark allowed to be destroyed? He had many questions.

However, he soon erased such thoughts. He knew Carlos had his reasons for making those decisions. Carlos was touted as being the greatest magician in history, but in the end, he was only a man. Even if he hadn’t passed away, the historical events that occurred afterwards were inevitable. He wouldn’t have been able to stop the fall of the Nadick Empire, and he wouldn’t have been able to stop the Plain of Darkness from using the Great Darkness, which had plunged the world into despair.

Azell knew Carlos would have done his best. Azell trusted him, so there was no resentment in his heart. Azell just wanted to meet and converse with him again.

“The so called guide should just tell us all the locations at once. It is messing up our schedule.”

“We are in the enviable position of receiving presents, so it is a bit unreasonable to require such.....”

“I wanna say it anyways.”

Azell snorted.

After traveling for a week, they were getting close to the location described by Yuren.

The problem they were facing was the fact that this place was located at the border region of Bijes kingdom and the Iellos kingdom. Of course, even if the the border was tightly guarded, it would cause no trouble to Azell’s party. However....

“Why are they moving their troops? Did a war start?”

The army of the Bijes kingdom was moving towards the border. There were a lot of soldiers gathered. It was as if they were about to go to war. There was a foreboding feeling in the air.

The party was out of sight. They stood on standby as Kairen went out to scout on his own. After half the day passed, he returned to report.

“First, our destination is close to the habitat of Dragons, so there won’t be too much problem in us getting there. The monsters might annoy us, but I don’t think we have to worry about us being confronted by the army of Bijes kingdom.”

“That is fortunate. However, by the look on your face, I’m guessing the situation is bad?”

“I thought this was just a political conflict between the two kingdoms, so I assumed this was a large-scale drill conducted as a

show of force. However, from what I heard, the Iellos kingdom had already clashed with the Bijes kingdom several time. The situation seems to be getting worse.....”

“Didn’t you recently say that the two countries were on pretty good terms?”

“That was my understanding.... Still, this was all I could gather by piecing together the conversations between the soldiers.”

Kairen displayed the irritation he was feeling. He had to stealthily approach soldiers, and he had to stay hidden as he gathered the information. Then he had to pieced together the fragmented information. It was a method that required a lot of patience. This was also why there was a limit on the amount of information that could be gathered.

“We made a mistake. We should have gathered some information as we travelled here.”

Normally, travelers were very sensitive to the affairs of the world. They were careful in vetting a region before their travels. In the past, Kairen had traveled around the world, and he had been very cautious in choosing his route.

However, the current party was moving so fast that they hadn’t paid attention to what was occuring in the world. Unlike normal travelers, they were travelling at a speed where they brushed past kingdoms, so they had been neglectful in finding out the lay of the land.

Azell furrowed his brows.

“Mmmm. Even if they are starting a war, we probably shouldn’t interfere... We have to prioritize getting to our destination first.”

“That might be our best option.”

The party decided on what they would do. They avoided the army of the Bijes kingdom as they headed towards their destination. However, an unexpected situation was waiting for

them.

...kyahhhhkhk!

They had already left behind the army of the Bijes kingdom, and they were about to cross the border when they heard a woman's scream. Then the scream of many people rang out.

“What's going on?”

The members of Azell's party looked at each other. Then they immediately changed direction as they sped forward.

2

Fortresses weren't the only settlements placed near the border between the Iellos kingdom and the Bijes kingdom. There were several towns scattered along the border. Even if border disputes occurred along the border, people refused to give up on settling on liveable lands. This was why towns had formed along the border.

The town named Patel was a good distance away from the border fortress, and it was a relative new town. The land was near the territory of Dragons, so there was a lot of monsters nearby. However, it was discovered that these lands were fertile. This was why this town was established even as blood was shed.

From time to time, they were still threatened by the monsters, so the people of the town were hardy. Their lord hadn't given them much of a fighting force, but the overall quality of the men in the watch was quite good. This was because retired knights or soldiers took up the role of being instructors to the men of the watch.

However, they only thought of the monsters as their enemies. This was why they were unexpectedly unprepared for an attack from human-led forces.

“Kyahhhhhhhhhkhk!”

A piercing scream ripped through the air.

It was dark within the town. The armed figures had ambushed

the town without any warning. They were putting out any fire they ran across.

In the beginning, the enemies had conducted a quiet raid. The young men on guard duty had been careless. This didn't mean they were shirking their duties. However, monsters and demonic beasts didn't sneak up on their opponents. This was why they could relax a little bit on their guard duty. They would be able to see the threat coming from across the darkness.

However, if their enemies were humans, it was an entirely different story. The enemy forces hid their presence, and in a flash, they dispatched the guards. They opened the door to the stockade, and they shot arrows at the townspeople. It didn't matter, who was shot. They were indiscriminately shooting in all directions, and this was why there weren't that many casualties. They were causing a panic.

When everyone realized something was wrong, the enemies had already infiltrated into the town. The human troops were at the head, and roaring orcs followed behind them. They cut down all the townspeople in sight.

“You bastards! What's your purpose of doing this!”

The retired old knight named Neals was an instructor for the watch. He had been drinking alcohol with his friends in the pub, so he was late in coming out with his sword. He was retired, but he was a knight trained in the Spirit Order. He cut into the Orcs and the humans slaughtering the townspeople.

“.....”

The enemies didn't respond to Neals. They kept attacking within the chaos.

Neals almost lost his life twice. Even if he was trained in the Spirit Order, it was difficult to fight in this degree of darkness. On the other hand, his enemies were attacking Neals with pinpoint

accuracy. They were all more skilled than Neals. His palms felt as if it was about to rip open when their swords clashed.

‘This won’t.....!’

In the end, a fatal opening was revealed when five of the enemies attacked him. Neals didn’t simply die on the spot, because his comrade came to his defense.

“Neals!”

Dillon, who was an instructor alongside Neals, stabbed with his spear to deter the attack of the enemies. Neals quickly retreated backwards as he caught his breath.

“Shit. Who are these bastards?”

“This isn’t good. I have no idea where these Orcs came from....”

As they fought, screams emanated from various locations. The guards and the men of the watch were caught with their pants down, so they were in disarray. Moreover, the enemy forces were killing every civilian they came across. As time passed, the amount of loss was snowballing.

“What happened to the signal flare?”

“We haven’t seen it. I think they were overtaken first.”

The garrison possessed a flare made by an alchemist. It was supposed to be shot up into the air when they were facing an opponent they couldn’t handle. It was an item that would have called for help. A significant amount of time had passed, but the flare hadn’t been launched.

Neals’ blood was curdling. Why weren’t they using fire arrows if they wanted to kill all the townspeople? Were they trying to avoid detection?

‘We have to notify someone....’

They would all die if things kept going like this. No matter how he viewed this situation there was no hope in sight. Suddenly, he

could only see darkness.

‘Magic.....!’

He had known something was wrong. Even if he was working together with Dillon, they should have been cut down already. Their enemies were much more skilled than them. So he hadn’t understood why they weren’t pressing forward. Now he knew they had been waiting for the support of a magician.

‘We don’t stand a chance. If a magician is here, we....’

He wasn’t able to end the thread of his thought. He felt something split open his body, and he felt pain wash over him.

“Neaaaaaaaals!”

Dillon’s desperate yell could be heard. Neals wanted to tell Dillon to run, but words failed to come out. Moreover.....!

“Their tactics are getting dirtier with each passing day.”

He could hear an icy voice. As he died, Neals could hear the shocked voice of Dillon.

“W...who are you?”

It was a relief. Dillon wasn’t dead. As he felt relief, Neals’ consciousness fell into the darkness.

Chapter 127 – Suspicious Movements (2)

3

When Azell's party arrived, the town had gone to hell. A small group of humans were leading a horde of 50 Orcs. They were killing every person in sight.

Azell spoke.

"I'll leave the command to you, Duke."

"All right. Laura and Yuren should skim the place with magic."

Kairen immediately started to give orders. Azell also had extensive experience in commanding a group during the Dragon Demon wars as an officer. However, he would rather use his personal martial skills to accomplish missions rather than focusing on commanding others. This was why he determined it would be better for Kairen to be in command.

"We'll prioritize tracking down and eliminating the hostile magicians."

The enemy forces were bringing forth the darkness by extinguishing all the light not because the Orcs could see well within the darkness. Magicians were supporting them with magic. It allowed their troops to discern objects in darkness.

Yuren nodded his head.

"Understood. Their magicians are pretty powerful."

"There are also two Dragon Majins."

In a flash, the two of them had sensed the magicians. At Laura's words, everyone turned to look at her. Azell asked a question.

"Are you sure it is them?"

"Yes, they are camouflaging the Dragon Demon magic as normal magic."

They were using a magic tool to skillfully cover up the presence of Dragon Demon magic. However, Laura knew about the existence of such magical tools, and she was able to identify its presence. At that moment, Kairen spoke.

“We will scatter to defeat the enemies one by one. Laura and Yuren will take down the enemy magicians, then they will guide the townspeople to safety.”

They decided not to charge in immediately. They were on standby as Yuren placed a magic communication spell over the party. When the communication network was completed, Kairen and Azell ran like the wind.

Leticia was about to follow after them when she asked a question to Yuren.

“Are you sure about this? Is it ok to deploy us like this?”

She still didn't completely trust Laura. Azell had put in a magical shunt within her, but Leticia had no idea how Laura would act when no one was close by to keep an eye on her.

Yuren shrugged his shoulders.

“We have no choice but to trust Azell's judgement.”

“You are being irresponsible by trusting him so much.”

“I've already bet everything on him. If his judgement is wrong, I'll probably be stabbed in the back. I'll survive somehow and I'll give him a piece of my mind afterwards.”

“You sound like a man, who lost his wallet as well as his soul by falling for a bad girl. You might have a predisposition for being a pushover. ”

Leticia gave those sarcastic remarks before she left him. Yuren grinned as he looked at Laura.

“Shall we go?”

“Should I say thank you for believing in me?”

Laura asked the question. Yuren shook his head from side to side.

“It isn’t as if I trust you.”

“Then why?”

“As I said before, I trust Azell’s judgement. Moreover, I’m not someone that’ll go down easily even if you try to stab me in the back. Let’s just go for now.”

As he spoke those words, Yuren extended his hand into the air. A marble made out of light rose up, and it exploded. A powerful wave of magical energy spread into the surrounding.

This had the effect of breaking the magic spell that allowed their enemies to see in the night as if it was midday. The enemy magicians were pretty talented, but they were of no trouble to Yuren.

“Well, then....”

Yuren winked towards Laura before he launched into the air. For a brief moment, Laura stared at his back. She mumbled absent-mindedly.

“Trust....”

She let out a small sigh as she launched herself into a different direction. She headed towards one of the magicians.

Yuren had just broken his magic spell, so the enemy magician was flustered. When he caught sight of Laura, he was taken aback.

“Traitor Laura Aunsaurus!”

The news of Laura’s betrayal had spread even to the rank and file members. It seemed specific information about her was spread too. If not, how could he recognize her in an instant when she was disguised as a human?

She had expected this, but it still felt very weird. She had yet to earn trust from her new allies, yet the people, who couldn’t even look at her straight in the past, was glaring at her with hate in

their eyes.

Laura used her magic to prevent the magician from contacting the others.

“Unfortunately, I only want one thing from you.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Your death.”

Laura unraveled her disguise spell, and she revealed herself as a Dragon Demon. Her tsunami-like Dragon Demon magic swept over the enemy magician.

4

A new wind picked up as it swirled around the site of the slaughter. An Orc had been dragging along a screaming woman by her hair. It stopped in surprise when a change suddenly occurred. It had been able to see its surrounding as if it was daylight, but now its sight had darkened.

It wasn't as if it couldn't see. Originally, Orcs were night creatures, so they saw better at night compared to humans. However, until a moment ago, it had been able to see everything clearly. The difference was so stark that it had a hard time discerning shapes for a brief moment.

Pee-eet!

The Orc heard a sound ring out. It was as if someone was plucking a string. In a flash, it flinched when it felt something tap against its neck.

“Koo-roohk.....?”

It wanted to speak out in confusion, but its voice wouldn't come out. It was because half of its neck had been severed. Soon, blood shot out from the wound, and it lost consciousness.

Peet! Peet! Pee-bi-bi-beet!

An unseen opponent was slaughtering the Orcs. It was a phantom-like existence. This being was so fast in slicing through Orcs that it would have been hard to keep track of this being even in daylight. The Orcs didn't even know what hit them. They were falling in droves.

Azell didn't stay in one place. He continued to run as he used his senses to acquire targets. He cut down all his targets. He didn't worry about saving and comforting each townspeople. He prioritized killing his enemies. Kairen was doing the same thing. It had been less than 2 minutes, yet the number of Orcs decreased in half.

Azell only stopped when he saw two old Spirit Order practitioners going up against one of the enemies. Azell dispersed his senses as he felt the fluctuation of magic.

'Detection magic? There is a magician here.'

Azell's gaze moved upwards. There was a magician hidden at the back of the roof. He was using an invisibility spell.

One of the old men had already fallen from a sword strike from the enemy. The other old man was letting out a shout of grief when the enemy tried to cut him down too. However, the enemy suddenly turned around to face Azell. The magician using the detection magic must have notified the swordsman down below about Azell's presence.

Kah-ahng!

After receiving Azell's sword strike, the swordsman flew backwards before he landed on the ground. It seemed he was unable to completely disperse the power of Azell's strike. He slid backwards.

"Their tactics are getting dirtier with each passing day."

Azell spoke with a cold voice. The surviving old man was taken aback, so he asked a question.

“W...who are you?”

“I’ll introduce myself at a later time.”

When the swordsman caught sight of Azell responding to the old man, he became frightened. The swordsman, who had blocked Azell’s sword, spoke.

“Are you perhaps the person, who possesses the name steeped in sin? Why are you here?”

From the perspective of Dragon Demon king worshippers, Azell was already on the list of figures that should be avoided in a direct fight. Even high ranking officers were told to avoid him if there wasn’t a plan in place to deal with him.

“It has been awhile since I’ve heard that really long and annoying title.”

“Huhk?”

The enemy swordsman was frightened. Azell was clearly walking towards him front the front, but his voice was heard from the swordsman’s back.

However, he hadn’t taken his eyes off of Azell. Azell struck out with his sword as he tried to take advantage of his enemy’s surprise.

Zzuh-uhng!

The enemy swordsman received Azell’s sword. A light exploded forth as the ground below the two combatants boiled like soup before it exploded.

Kwah-gwah-gwah-gwahng!

“I’m guessing you aren’t part of the regular troops?”

Azell was surprised. From what he experience up until now, all the rank and file members of their troops had fallen for the voice that was heard from the back. They were all killed with a single strike.

However, this person had blocked Azell's attack. His concentration had been disturbed, yet he was able to follow Azell's movements. It was surprising.

“Why don't you guys stop it with the lame disguises? Even if you are able to hide your Dragon Demon magic, your Dragon Arts can't imitate Spirit Order, Dragon Majin.”

“Koohk!”

The enemy swordsman grinded his teeth. They had hidden their true skills as a ploy to disguise their identities. In truth, this mission was capable of being completed without using their full power.

However, they couldn't afford to hold back now that Azell had appeared. From the information they possessed, they couldn't win against this opponent even if they used all their power.

Ooooooooooooooh!

The disguised swordsman dispelled his disguise to show his true form. He was a young Dragon Majin male with dark red horns and red eyes. Dragon Demon magic swirled around him as he charged Azell.

“Shit! I won't go down so easily!”

“As I thought, you aren't part of the regular troops. Are you an officer, who came out from the Plain of Darkness?”

Azell exchanged frantic sword strikes with him as he asked the question. He had gained a lot of information regarding the Plain of Darkness thanks to Laura, Yuren and Leticia. Aside from high ranking officers like Niberis and Laura, there were plenty of officers composed of Dragon Demons and Dragon Majins. A portion of this population had enough power to conduct the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

The Dragon Majin confronting Azell was very skilled. If one considered only physical capability, he was on par with Azell. He

was also using techniques that were considered to be high level Dragon Art techniques. Moreover....

Pah-bahng!

From a completely different angle from the sword, a ball of light came towards Azell. He deflected it with his shoulder. An orb made out of light was floating around the Dragon Majin. It wasn't something made out his Dragon Arts. It was a product of magic. The magician hidden atop the rooftop was supporting the Dragon Majin.

‘They work well together.’

It was very hard to support a fighter using physically destructive magic especially when the person was fighting a close combat with swords. This meant their minds were connected as the Dragon Majin decided the timing and the location of the magic attack.

Pa-pa-pa-pa-pah!

The Dragon Majin's sword flew toward Azell from the front, and the orb of light formed by the magicians moved all over the place to attack with light.

At the same time, the magician used other magic spells in succession. He was attempting to use curses that affect one's sight, hearing and perception. He even tried to move the earth to trap Azell's feet. The magician was able to assist with the orb of light, while attacking with quick and accurate magic attack. The magician was very skilled.

‘These two are quite skilled.’

The Dragon Majin wasn't as skilled as Duran, whom he had killed. However, he was skilled enough to defeat Arrieta and Seigar by himself. The magician also displayed much more skill than the magicians from the Dragon's Shadow..

Pahhhhhhng!

Light exploded from atop the roof. Azell furrowed his brows.

‘Did information about me get passed around? Did they come up with how to cope with me or....?’

He didn’t show any outward signs as he suddenly sent a dagger towards the magician. However, it was blocked. The fact that he was able to anticipate such an attack meant that there might be a Reaction type defensive barrier in use here.

However, it was a bit doubtful to think that the magician’s excellent skill enabled him to deal with Azell’s sudden attack. Maybe, they had a record of all the battles he had conducted with them, and they had analyzed the records. Did they make a manual on how to fight Azell?

Azell asked a question.

“Will you not answer my question?”

“I will inform you when your soul, which is deeply steeped in sin, departs your lowly body.”

“That is unfortunate. Doesn’t that mean I will never get to hear your answer?”

“Do you really think so? Rumble beneath my dignity!”

Koo-uhhhhhhhhhh!

When he spoke the cantrip, an oppressive mental wave spread into the surrounding. It wasn’t limited to a mental wave. A shockwave with physical properties followed behind the mental wave. It shook the surrounding.

“Koohk!”

It was an attack that couldn’t threaten Azell. However, the problem was the fact that Dillons was behind him. A regular person would die from the shockwave, so Azell had no choice to block the attack.

The Dragon Majin used this opportunity to press his advantage.

A sword strike surrounded by light fell towards Azell like a rain shower.

Pa-pa-pa-pa-pah!

Once he was put at a disadvantage, Azell struggled as he was pushed backwards. The problem faced by Azell wasn't caused only by the attacks from the Dragon Majin. The orb of light was increasing in number, and it was driving him into a sticky situation.

"I won't give you time to summon your Dragon weapon!"

If Azell was able to summon his Dragon weapon, the situation would be turned on its head in an instant. Since the two knew this, they planned on ending the fight by going all out with their attacks.

Azell was focused on defense, so his movements were becoming more restricted. Now that he was put on the defensive, he was busy keeping up his defense.

Pah-paht! Pa-pa-pa-pa-pah!

The falling light kept getting past the defense of his sword. As expected, the magic spells were the problem. The magician kept using a different spell each time, and his defense was disrupted when blocking the incoming spells.

While the magician was sending his spell, he diligently increased the omnidirectional attack. The orbs of light supporting the Dragon Majin's sword strikes had already reached 10 in number.

The Dragon Majin's eyes shone.

'Amazing defense! However, it is only a matter of time!'

The Dragon Majin, who was pushing against Azell's defense, couldn't hold back his shock. Azell was pushed up against the wall, yet he didn't allow a single attack to scratch him. He blocked and deflected the sword strikes. He also trusted his armor's defensive

capability as he used the rounded parts of his armor to receive the attack at an angle to avoid damage.

However, he had a limit. At some point, Azell's movement slipped.....

Too-ahhhhhhhhhng!

A powerful shockwave swept over the Dragon Majin.

‘What the hell?’

Chapter 128 – Suspicious Movements (3)

‘What the hell?’

The Dragon Majin was taken aback. The Dragon Majin hadn’t given his opponent enough time to gather a significant amount of power. However, Azell’s sword held an incredible amount of power within it. When their swords clashed, the Dragon Majin’s body was stunned for a brief moment.

Soon, the Dragon Majin realized what method had been used by Azell. While they were exchanging sword strikes, Azell had let a small trickle of his magical energy infuse into the sword of the Dragon Majin, then he had detonated it.

“Ooh-ook!”

He hadn’t noticed what was occurring, since he had been in a fierce duel. His heart leapt into his mouth. However, Azell was unable to take advantage of the opening thanks to the magical support from the magician. He was unable to go on the offensive.

He was only able to break up the stance of the Dragon Majin.

The Dragon majin jumped forward to apply an additional attack when it happened.

“You guys really did you homework on how do deal with me. I have to commend you guys.”

“What?”

The Dragon Majin assumed a repulsive force would arise when their swords clashed, but Azell’s sword slipped by his sword as if it was an illusion. Then the orbs of light passed through the empty air.

‘Instantaneous movement? He did it while we were in contact with each other?’

Did he prepare the Instantaneous Movement in the brief moment

when he was stunned? Azell's figure disappeared from his sight.

Kwahng!

He was able to block the next attack only by luck. He had instinctively hunched into himself as he protected his upper body. This was why he was able to intercept Azell's sword strike.

“Koo-oohk!”

However, the attack bypassed his defense, and it shook his internal organs. The Dragon Majin immediately kicked off the ground, and he used the Instantaneous Movement technique. He planned on retreating first before he re-acquired Azell in his field of vision.

Pah-ahhhhhhhh!

However, at that moment, he heard a shout of alarm from the magician he was connected to. After Azell attacked him, he had immediately went after the magician.

‘As expected, he knows my location!’

The magician had hidden himself, but he was releasing a lot of offensive spells. Therefore, he knew it had been a matter of time before he was found.

The Dragon Majin gritted his teeth as he kicked off the ground....

Pah-hahk!

He heard the sound of a body being cut into two.

“...Uh?”

Suddenly, he could see a cape in his field of vision. He finally realized that he fell for a trap.

‘Incarnation.....!’

He had no idea which one was the clone. Azell had been waiting for the moment the Dragon Majin focused his attention away towards his comrade.

‘Ha! How can such a ridiculous bastard exist? Why did such a tribulation come to us.....’

The Dragon Majin could feel the despair through the link connecting him to his comrade. He heard the short scream let out by his comrade.

“...all of you are skilled enough to be placed highly no matter where you go. Does this mean you guys are placing that high of an importance on this plan?”

Azell mumbled to himself after he took down the Dragon Majin and the magician.

The Dragon Majin was probably an officer dispatched from the Plain of Darkness according to the information he gathered from Laura, Yuren and Leticia. The troops that had been sent here by the Plain of Darkness was of high quality, and this meant that they had put a lot of importance on this plan. Moreover, it was obvious as to why the Dragon Demon King worshippers were were attacking this town.

The wanted a war between the Bijes kingdom and the Iellos kingdom.

They were probably going to make it look as if the army of Iellos had slaughtered the people of this town. It was a simple, yet effective tactic.

‘These fuckers. Even if I know what they are trying to do, it isn’t a problem I can remedy. I wonder if the Guardian Shadows would be more suitable.’

He had no choice, but to rely on the Guardian Shadows. They held influence over the entire continent, but there was also a systematic attempt by the organization to keep their identity a secret. Wouldn’t that put a restriction on what they could actually do?

As Azell was having these thoughts, Dillons started asking him

questions.

“Who are you? What the hell is all of this.... What’s going on?”

“They are Dragon Demon King worshippers from the Plain of Darkness.”

“They are Dragon Demon King worshippers?”

“At the very least, you can probably tell that they aren’t from the Iellos kingdom. I believe they are here to instigate a war between Bijes and Iellos. Let us hope that the situation doesn’t devolve to that level.”

After he spoke those words, Azell threw himself into the air. The situation wasn’t good enough where he could calmly have a conversation with his man. Moreover, they would be put in an awkward situation if the identity of the members of his party was revealed. The best thing to do was to save then inform the people of this town on what was going on. Then they had to make themselves scarce.

Soon, Azell’s party killed all of the Dragon Demon King worshippers, and they gathered at the entrance of the town.

Azell asked Balseru a question.

“Why didn’t you use the Guardian Shadows?”

“There were too many witnesses.”

Balseru answered. He had been following the party from a distance, but he had participated in the battle. However, he hadn’t called forth any other Guardian Shadows. He fought by himself.

‘I wanted to see how skilled he was.....’

Surprisingly, no one in the party had caught sight of Balseru in action. He really was like a ghost. He only picked places where he wouldn’t be seen as he had killed the Orcs.

“Then I’ll excuse myself once again.”

Balseru ignored the gazes from the party as he walked away into the distance. Although they had fought together in battle, it seemed Balseru still planned on putting distance from the party.

Kairen grumbled.

“What a creepy guy.”

“I agree. Let’s get out of here.”

The flare was shot into the air, and they exited the town when they saw the army of the Bijes kingdom coming towards them.

Suddenly, Kairen spoke.

“By the way.... It seemed you had to exert yourself a little bit more than usual.”

“It seemed they had analyzed information regarding me, and they came up with a countermeasure. It took me a lot of time, because I wanted to see what they knew about me.”

It made him think of his past. During the Dragon Demon war, the Dragon Demon King’s army were very wary of Azell. This was why they devised all kinds of methods in attempt to stop him. They even created a special force that were trained in a specialized battle tactic to catch him. No more words were needed to be said.

Kairen showed interest in the topic.

“How was it?”

“It was pretty good. They had come across me by mistake, yet they were quite effective in putting the plan in play. We’ll have to be more careful from now on.”

Azell gave an honest assessment. Kairen thought for a brief moment before he spoke.

“We did kill all of them, but they will probably know about our whereabouts now..”

“I agree. Then there are the ones that are still looking at us.”

He could feel gazes looking at him from far away. It seemed Dragon Demon King worshippers used observers, who moved independent of the force carrying out the mission.

“Shall I try catch them?”

“It’ll be an empty gesture. They are pretty far away, and they are spread out. We’ll rattle them first, then we can feed them false information.

“Fortunately, we have two talented magicians.”

Azell had identified five enemy observers. The closest one was 500 meters away, and the others were scattered far from each other. This was why it would be hard to hunt them all down in one fell swoop.

At this distance, a magician’s ability shined more so than a swordsman. Soon, Yuren and Laura casted spells towards locations pointed out by Azell and Kairen. It was too far away, so they were only able to cause a momentary distraction. However, that was enough. The party immediately used their camouflage technique. Then they sent an exact replica of their image towards an entirely different direction.

Kairen spoke.

“Anyways, it’ll be hard for them to predict where we are heading, so we’ll be able to avoid their detection again.”

The party was only here, because they received information from Yuren’s guide. This roundabout route hadn’t been part of their original plan, so even if the Plain of Darkness knew their current destination, they wouldn’t be able to easily discern their final destination.

Azell spoke.

“If it is as Balseru had said, we’ll be pursued sooner rather than later.”

“We’ll see if his words were correct or not. Situations like this always turns out for the worse in the end for me.”

Kairen grumbled as if in disapproval.

5

Road of Emptiness.

It was a magical artifact left behind by Dragon Demon King Atein.

The artifact’s worth was priceless, since it allowed instantaneous travel to various locations on the continent from the Plain of Darkness. It was a magic spell that couldn’t be replicated, so the Plain of Darkness put great importance on the waypoints of the Road of Emptiness. It was disguised thoroughly, so outsiders wouldn’t have any knowledge about it. Moreover, there were always a good amount of troops placed at each waypoint in order to protect them.

However, the Plain of Darkness was currently being plagued by a chronic problem. They had limited resources, and they had to be spent in a wise way. It was inevitable, since they were carrying out insidious plans across the continent.

<If I say the sight of these bastards make me feel sick, would you find it to be funny?>

A Skeleton Knight wearing black gold armor spoke. The surface of the armor had red lines running through it like arteries. It was an ominous sight. At a glance, one could tell it was a armor infused with powerful magic. If Azell saw this Undead, he would have been reminded of Delta and Zeta.

The Undead was a Skeleton Knight, and the armor had a similar design as the one worn by Zeta. However, unlike Zeta, one could see a sculpture-like horn protruding from the left side of the helmet, and its voice was entirely different.

<I would.>

Another similar looking Undead spoke with an apathetic voice. This one didn't have a horn, so if one discounted its voice and weapon, it looked very similar to Zeta. It held a mace on the right hand, and a shield on the left. The black magical weapons was infused with an ominous magical energy.

They were in a winding tunnel, and all the enemies blocking their path were Undead. They weren't just normal corpses. It looked as if they had been pieced together using numerous body parts. The bizarre looking monsters let out a horrifying sound as they blocked the path of the Skeleton Knights.

However, the two Undead Skeleton Knights were easily destroying all the monsters in their path.

Their magical energies, techniques and equipments were too powerful. They were like a localized typhoon. After they swept through the monsters, the sound of children whispering could be heard. The white Guardian Shadows finished off the ones that weren't completely destroyed.

They were so powerful that the woman following behind them didn't even need to stop once. She kept walking forward. The cold-faced woman with long blonde hair spoke.

“You should just stick to doing your job, Lambda and Mu.”

The Dragon Majin Undead named Lambda grumbled at those word.

<Why aren't you doing your work, Iota?>

“As a matter of fact, it is probably time for me to move.”

The blonde haired woman was a Keeper of Prophecy named Iota. She had been following the two up until now, but her eyes flashed when she saw the approaching enemies.

<You bastards!>

These were Undeads, who possessed intellect. However, unlike

the Guardian Shadows, their opponents were all magicians.

Normally, Undead Spirit Order practitioners and Undead Dragon Arts practitioners had a hard time replicating the power they possessed when alive. On the other hand, Undead magicians retained most of their powers. In some cases, they became stronger in death.

The Undead magicians started to pour forth their magic spells. This was when Iota stepped forward.

“Ah ah. Even the Undead magicians were made from scraps.... They are very sensible in reusing their resources. I really like it. I like it so much that I want to kill them all.”

She let out a twisted laugh as she engaged her defensive magic.

Normally, Undead Magicians chose to pass onto death. They opened the forbidden door in an attempt to gain a stronger power. However, these beings weren't such existences.

An evil mind had recycled these beings in an attempt to re-use the abilities possessed by dead magicians. As a high ranked magician, Iota could tell at a glance that these Undeads didn't truly possess self-awareness. They were like the mindless Undeads in the fact that a simple battle intelligence was artificially placed within them. It awoke automatically in battle situations. It had nothing to do with whether they possessed self-awareness or not.

This was why they were less skilled even if they were Undead magicians. Their magical power was strong, but the way they used it was too simple. It was a nightmare-like amount of fire power for most opponents, but they were easy pickings for a high ranked magician like Iota.

Ggwah-gwah-gwahng! Gwah-gwahng!

After receiving support from Iota, the troop of Guardian Shadows broke through the encirclement of Undead in a flash. Iota spoke.

“Isn’t it time for the administrator to show up soon? I’m not sure how many there are.”

Chapter 129 – Suspicious Movements (4)

They had attacked several waypoints to the Road of Emptiness before this, but they rarely found living troops dispatched to those locations. Since Undead and Golems do not need rest and sleep, they were used as dogs to guard the house. However, administrators were on standby to oversee them. Moreover.....

<Shit. That damned mechanism just activated.>

Lambda looked towards the inner tunnel. He sensed a powerful magical device activate. It was the Road of Emptiness.

“It seems someone is coming here from the Plain of Darkness. We should welcome it.”

Iota actually had a smile on her face. She didn't know who the Plain of Darkness was sending, but it would be a powerful existence. She was quite happy, since she would have the chance to defeat such an existence.

Soon, they arrived at the space where the Road of Emptiness existed. This large space was created artificially, and in the middle, there was a round golden structure. This was the magical device that connected one to the Road of Emptiness.

There was a chasm at the middle of the Road of Emptiness, and three people appeared from within. When she saw them, Iota smiled.

“Ho-oh. They sent three officers. This will be a delightful feast.”

She also lost everything to the Dragon Demon King worshippers before she became a Keeper of Prophecy. The fact that she could cause more harm to the Dragon Demon King worshippers made her happy.

“You lowly bastards dare to dirty the holy artifact of the king!”

The man, who exited the Road of Emptiness, raged. As if it was

responding to his anger, a powerful wave of Dragon Demon magic spread out into the surrounding.

The man had long black hair, and a blue colored light surrounded him. There were horns protruding from between his hair that was similar to a bull's horns. He was the descendant of the one of the 4 legendary Dragon Demon general. His name was Almarick Jeffers.

The others were Dragon Majin officers, who had followed him here. They were much lower in rank than Jeffers, but they were all very skilled. There was a restriction on how many people could travel through the Road of Emptiness. This was why they sent their strong members.

Iota laughed.

“How foolish. You guys are already facing a manpower shortage, yet you are throwing away precious manpower as if they are trash..... You are clinging to a mere tool.”

If Iota was in their shoes, she would have given up on the Road of Emptiness. She would have destroyed the magical device thoroughly, so the Guardian Shadows would be unable to learn of its secret. The wise move was to aim for a different opportunity.

However, it was the same story as when they attacked the previous waypoints. They couldn't let go of their foolish fixation. The reason being the Road of Emptiness was one of Dragon Demon King Atein's artifacts. It couldn't be recreated with current knowledge of magic.

‘We will not allow unbelievers to sully the great king's artifact!’

They had an illogical obsession. They directed their fanaticism towards someone, who was already dead.

Iota mocked their foolishness. Of course, their foolishness was a lovely opportunity for her.

“I bet the Dragon Demon worshippers in the vicinity are all headed here. Shall we enjoy the feast?”

Of course, it wasn't enough to just send Jeffers. They were probably mobilizing all their fighting forces nearby. Maybe other officers might come through from other waypoints on the Road of Emptiness.

"I command upon my great name! Come back from the eternal battlefield! Dragon Arts: Storm of Blades!"

Hoo-ooooooooooooh!

Jeffers knew he was at a disadvantage, so he immediately used his Dragon Arts. It was humiliating to use his Dragon Arts on the lowly Undeads, but he had the holy duty of protecting the great king's relic. In front of such a task, his pride amounted to nothing.

His sword became transparent as if it was made out of glass, and a blue flame climbed up the blade. Iota spoke as if he watched him.

"That magical weapon.... Is that what they call a Dragon weapon? It's an interesting item. The fact that I'll be able to end the succession of this weapon makes me want to kill you more."

The flame of hate started to burn within her eyes. She spoke.

"Lambda. Mu. Take care of them."

<Your wish is my command..>

Lambda and Mu split up to take care of the officers. Jeffers ran forward as he let loose his Storm of Blades.

Kah-ang!

However, Mu blocked it with his shield. Then the Guardian Shadows surrounding Iota swept towards them en masse like a wave.

"You bastards!"

The blue flame whirled as it shot out into the surrounding. This attack was able to affect a wide range. Moreover, Jeffers could choose, who the flame affected. It wasn't a physical manifestation of heat. This surprising magical flame was able to ignite the

magical energy within his opponents.

Even Lambda, Mu and the Guardian Shadows were unable to break through the flames. When they were pushed back, the Dragon Majin officers attacked them.

Pahhhhhhng!

However, a sudden and violent magical backlash occurred. It was as if an explosion had gone off as light exploded forth.

The blue flames created by Jeffers' Dragon weapon dissipated quickly. Jeffers was taken aback.

“What?!”

“It performs well, but it is easy to deal with.”

Iota mocked him. A faint gold light emanated from her hands. Jeffers was shocked when he saw it.

“That Dragon Demon magic is.....”

A wave of Dragon Demon magic that was on par with his own was coming out of Iota. The Plain of Darkness didn't know much about the Guardian Shadows, but it was known that they were a special existence amongst Guardian Shadows. Moreover, they knew that humans amongst them possessed Dragon Demon magic as if they had gone through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

However, Jeffers couldn't help, but be surprised at what Iota had done.

There was a big crysta like magical construct hanging around her. It was the size of a child's fist. This wasn't a simple magical product. The Dragon Demon magic emitted by Iota was constructed from a special image from within her mind. It extinguished everything from magic to Dragon Demon Qi.

“Your magic is powerless in front of me. I have awakened to the power of prophecy.”

Iota declared in an haughty fashion.

Power of Prophecy.

It was a latent power within the Keepers of the Prophecy. However, only three Keepers of Prophecy was able to awaken to the power. This really drove home the fact that it was very hard to awaken to this power.

“Ridiculous! Koo-uhk!”

Jeffers coughed up blood.

Jeffers felt a powerful backlash just from his magic touching Iota’s magical construct. Moreover, she was able to specify this power to work on only the enemy’s magic!

Jeffers was a Dragon Arts practitioner, but all the equipments he wore was infused with magic. Moreover, the magical construct flew in towards him, while he was fighting Lambda, Mu and the Guardian Shadows. It felt as if his innards was being ripped into pieces by the shock.

Moreover, his Dragon weapon was also part of the problem. His Dragon weapon, ‘Tempest’s Blade’ didn’t react negatively to the magical construct. However, the cursed blue flame was created from magic, so it caused a backlash. If he sealed the use of the flames, he wouldn’t have access to most of the function of his Dragon weapon

Puh-uh-uhng!

“Koo-ahk!”

In the end, Jeffers was sent flying in a bloody mess. One of the Dragon Majin officers was a magician. His head was blown away by Mu’s mace. The other officer was a Dragon Majin warrior, and his arms were broken. He backed off as he tried to gather his breath.

‘W...what ridiculous power.....’

This was a losing fight from the beginning. The Guardian Shadows had the numeric superiority, and the fear of the waypoint

being destroyed made them come here without much of a plan.

They had come here thinking they would just buy some time. It was as Iota had surmised. Dragon Demon King worshippers were gathering to this location, so he had wanted to fight a defensive battle. He had thought he could turn the table on them....

It was a complete miscalculation.

He never expected to die in such a ridiculous manner. It happened when Jeffers was despairing.

“Mmm. I guess you really are Almarick’s descendant? I guess I have to save you.”

An easygoing voice could be heard.

6

Everyone became surprised, and they turned to look at the location where the voice had emanated. A Dragon Demon was coming towards them from the tunnel.

Iota was taken aback.

‘He didn’t set off my detection magic?’

She had put up a detection magic spell. She wanted to keep tabs on what was going on outside. However, the Dragon Demon hadn’t triggered it.

The Dragon Demon youth had messy black hair. His eyes and Dragon Demon stone were a green color. He also had something akin to a ram’s horn that was silver with a bluish tint. His face didn’t hold any tension, and he looked kind. He looked as if he had come out without changing his clothes after he took a nap within his house. He was very loose. Basically, he was unarmed.

‘Why didn’t the Guardian Shadows react to him?’

The problem wasn’t the fact that he was able to dodge her detection magic. Even the Guardian Shadows were unable to sense the presence of this youth.

As soon as that thought crossed their minds, one of the Guardian Shadows attacked him. The ghost closed the distance as he attacked.

<What the hell?>

Lambda was astounded. The Dragon Demon youth just stood there, and he took the Guardian Shadow's sword strike. However, after a moment, he could see that the youth had retreated the exact distance of the sword strike.

The Dragon Demon youth laughed.

"Wow. You guys are so violent. You guys attack on sight? That kind of attitude will turn a non-enemy into an enemy."

He leisurely avoided the sword strike to the side, and his presence started to change. His presence could now be felt by the Detection magic....

'Incredible Dragon Demon magic!'

It felt as if all the hairs on her body was standing up on its ends. The relaxed looking Dragon Demon youth was letting out a boundless amount of Dragon Demon magic. It was a brief glimpse into his powers, but he was on a completely different level compared to Jeffers. Jeffers was outstanding in terms of Dragon Demon magic, but if one compared him to this youth... It was like comparing a brook to a lake.

'He is on a completely different level compared to any Dragon Demons I've seen up until now. He might exceed a Dragon in terms of power....!'

Iota had killed countless Dragon Demon king worshippers as the Keeper of Prophecy. However, no one had possessed comparable Dragon Demon magic as this person.

The youth gestured to calm her down as he spoke.

"Calm down. I'm not a Dragon Demon king worshipper. I don't

really want to fight with you guys.”

“What do you mean?”

“I came here to borrow and use the Road of Emptiness. However, the situation turned into this.... It would be great if you’ll allow me to take the descendant of Almarick. I don’t care what you do with the other afterwards.”

“The negotiation ends now.”

She attacked at the same time as she spoke. The clear magical constructs surrounded the youth, and the Guardian Shadows attack all at the same time.

Pah-ahhhhhhhhhhhng!

There was an explosion of light. However, the result completely differed from what Iota had expected. The entire force of Guardian Shadows were repelled.

A clear light dragon was surrounding the youth’s body. Iota, Lambda and Mu became surprised when they saw it.

‘What the hell is that?’

This was a type of power they had never seen before. The red semi-transparent dragon of light wound itself around the youth’s body and it was growling at them. One could feel a strong will from it as if it was alive.

The youth scratched his cheeks as if he was in a bind.

“I said I don’t want to fight, but you guys are being very aggressive. Well, I still haven’t decided what to do with you guys, so I’ll finish my business first.”

“Lambda! Mu!”

Iota yelled out towards them. Lambda and Mu were like a tornado of steel as they charged the youth. They hadn’t completely neutralized Jeffers and the Dragon Majin officer, but this man was much more dangerous than them!

Shwee, shwee, shwee, swheeee!

Lambda's sword moved through the air in a dazzling display. A normal human would have died without seeing the sword coming.

However, the youth evade all the sword strikes. He wasn't even in a defensive stance. He just moved slightly to dodge with a paper thin margin.

<Kook!>

While Lambda was becoming frustrated, Mu lashed out with his shield from an angle. The surface area of the shield was large, so the youth had to avoid by making a big movement. Mu's mace moved as if it had been waiting for this moment. It arrived where the youth couldn't dodge.

“Ooht-cha!”

The youth blocked the mace with his bare hand. Mu was shocked.

<What kind of ridiculous.....!>

The mace had enough power to destroy a house. However, the youth had blocked it with one hand, and it looked as if the youth had felt a no ill effects from it. When the mace's head met his palm, he pulled off a superb move by grabbing and pulling it to dissipate all of the power behind the mace. It was a crazy trick.

Afterwards, the youth disappeared from his field of vision.

Too-oohng!

Something brushed by Mu's body. The youth had spun to the side as he applied a blow to Mu's side. However, the blow was weak. Was he unable to put a lot of strength behind it, because he was moving so fast?

It happened as he had this thought. He tried to turn his body.

Kwah-jahk!

<Koo-uhkk.....?>

His armor was destroyed, and his innermost bones were broken. Mu sank down to the floor. It had looked like a light attack, so did he use a skill? If it was a skill that penetrated armor, his magical armor should have stopped it.

Hoo-oooooooooooooooooh!

Afterwards, a gust rose up. Lambda was a beat too late in attacking, and the youth was already gone. For a moment, he doubted his senses, since the youth had just disappeared. However, the youth was leisurely walking away, and each step moved him several meters away....

Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah!

An explosion rang out.

Lambda and all the Guardian Shadows, who were running towards the youth, were all sent flying.

<This... What a ridiculous technique.....!>

Mu was already on the floor, so he was able to see the truth behind the technique. The youth had used short-distance Instantaneous movements continuously, and he was off beat everytime he moved. It messed with everyone's senses. The more surprising part was....

<He isn't just moving. He is using Instantaneous movement on each body part? This should be impossible!>

The youth wasn't just moving his entire body as a whole. His Instantaneous movement varied depending on what specific movements he wanted to perform. It was clear that his physical ability was outstanding, but how could his hands and feet use Instantaneous movement separate from the body? How were the hands and feet able to keep up?

It should be impossible. If an Undead like him tried this method,

his bones would be crushed. So how was he able to pull it off with a living body? Just the act of repelling the Guardian Shadows should have crushed his body. When he forcibly stopped on a dime, the backlash should make his body explode.

“Oh. You have a great eye to see that. You must have been very talented in life.”

The youth asked as if he was amused.

“Anyways.... Do you know where the miss acquired the item she is using? It is something I’ve seen before.”

The youth was a Dragon Arts practitioner, and he didn’t possess any magical items. This was why the magical constructs spread by Iota wasn’t responding to him.

Iota spoke with a tense expression on her face.

“There is no reason why I should tell you that.”

“You are being so cold. Box of Hate.”

Iota flinched at his words. The words didn’t have any context behind it, so she thought he had spoken a word of activation. She was on guard for a spell. The youth let out a bitter laugh.

“By your reaction, it seems you don’t know much about it even if you are using it. You call yourselves the Guardian Shadows....”

He tilted his head, and he approached Jeffers....

“Ooh-wahk! W...what the hell are you doing!”

He started stripping Jeffers.

Booh-ook! Zzeek! Chul-koo-ruhk!

The armor was ripped away, and Jeffers’ clothes were torn away. Jeffers was scared out of his wits, so he struggled. However, the youth ruthlessly struck the back of Jeffers’ neck.

“Kuh-uhk!”

Jeffers fainted immediately, and the youth stripped him nude in

an instant.

“.....”

Everyone was just dumbfounded as they watched what was happening.

What the hell was he doing?

The youth put the nude Jeffers over his shoulder.

“Please excuse me. You should get on with your work.”

“Wait a moment!”

Iota came to her senses as she yelled out, but the youth didn't listen to her. He immediately kicked off the ground, and he disappeared using the Instantaneous method. Iota had put up magical constructs in the air, but it didn't react to his presence. It was, because the youth had stripped Jeffers nude.

“Kook!”

The Guardian Shadows tried to catch them, but they didn't stand a chance. He was so fast that the Guardian Shadows couldn't even react before he was past them.

“...that's ridiculous.”

<It feels like I just had a nightmare.>

<I agree with you.>

The youth had destroyed their bodies, but the two Undead didn't receive any critical blows. However, the blow had Dragon Demon magic behind it, so the recovery process was slowed.

<He could have slaughtered us all, yet he let us go... What is he thinking?>

As the youth had suggested in the beginning, he left behind the Dragon Majin officer after he rescued Jeffers.

A silence had descended, and the first to break it was Iota. She spoke as she sighed.

“All right. There is no reason why he should stand here absent-mindedly. Let’s do our job then he can slowly think this over.”

<All right.>

The remaining Dragon Majin officer’s face turned pale. He had been listening to their absent-minded words, and now he realized his life was at an end.

Soon, a gruesome scream rang out, and their work was done.

Chapter 130 – Suspicious Movements (5)

7

If one had to describe what Laura had been, she was someone so precious that water never touched her hands. She was born into this world through a magic experiment, but after she received the name of Aunsaurus, she was treated like a queen. Aside from learning magic and carrying out her missions, she hadn't even needed to lift a finger to dress herself. Others would do it for her.

Now she was in a situation where she had to wash her dishes and clothes. Unexpectedly, she found the mundae everyday work to be refreshing. She enjoyed doing these tasks throughout her travels. However, there was one thing she couldn't let go.

“What happened?”

Azell held up a piece of cloth that was twisted and dried up. It used to be a women's apparel. It was Laura's clothes.

Amongst the party, Laura had the most clothes. She bought clothes from every town they visited, and she squirreled them away in her pack. Since she didn't ask others to carry her pack, no one complained. They were traveling a long distance at a ridiculous pace, so it was stupid to increase one's luggage. However, if she wasn't slowing them down, wasn't it up to her to decide on what she wanted to do?

Laura had grown up pampered, so she was fixated with being clean. Even when they camped outside, she always went out and found water. She used magic to clean herself, and she changed into a different clothes daily. Leticia was also a woman, yet she was on the opposite side of the spectrum as Laura. Leticia had lived a very rough life, so she held the same view of cleanliness as men. Moreover, travelers were intrinsically more tolerant against not being clean compared to normal people.

‘Well, she does seem to be more feminine....’

Laura changed clothes everyday, so she did laundry more than anyone else. However, she didn’t have the time to dry her laundry unless they were at an inn. This was why she had used magic to dry it fast... She had made a rare mistake, and now she wouldn’t be able to wear these particular clothes.

He had wondered why she hadn’t come back from the creek. He had found sitting next next to the clothes as she hugged her knees.

Her expression didn’t show it, but it looked as if she was conflicted about something. He discreetly sat next to her, and he queried her.

“Are you sick? Did you get hurt during the battle?”

“...no.”

Laura, who hadn’t shown any reaction to his presence, answered him. There was a sigh mixed in with her words.

Then another awkward silence descended. After Azell waited for a brief moment, he glanced at her as he spoke.

“If you don’t want to talk about it, you don’t have to. I don’t plan on interrogating you.”

“.....”

Laura didn’t respond to him. Azell shrugged his shoulders slightly before he stood up. Azell turned around, and when he took couple steps, he heard Laura’s whispered words.

“...it was a situation where I had to kill him.”

Azell walked back, and he sat back down next to her again. Laura continued to speak. She tilted her head, so she could place her head on one of her knees.

“How I would be treated by them.... I knew from the beginning what it will be like. I used to be one of them.”

Despite everything, she had firmed her resolve to follow Azell. The Dragon Demon king worshippers were fanatics, and they demanded complete faith in their god. If one showed even a little sign of faltering from their faith, a violent punishment would be applied to the traitor. Someone who tried to save you yesterday would try to kill you with a vengeance.

However, she realized some of what she imagined was matched in reality, but the parts that didn't match was very different. She had imagined the consequences of her actions as a way to harden her resolve. However, the shock she felt when she confronted reality was huge.

The magician, who had died at Laura's hands, spoke with a voice full of venom. He had cursed her.

'You bitch! You will forever burn in the fire of hell! We will use whatever method to kill someone, who betrayed their comrades and our faith! This is a promise! Your body and soul will be punished! You will be in so much pain that you will wish you were dead!'

...if it was them, they would be able to follow through on such a threat. They had a method of giving pain that was so severe that it was as if one was in hell. Moreover, one couldn't seek release from the pain through death.

However, she wasn't afraid of that. Fear was not what made her upset.

Laura asked him a question.

"I'm sure you have heard a lot of curses thrown at you by your enemies."

"Yes."

"What did you do each time?"

"I didn't pay attention to it. If I let myself become occupied with such words, it'll be endless."

“I think I was like that in the past. It was bit different, but still.....”

When she had carried out a mission as a Dragon Demon king worshipper, she hadn't had such thoughts. She followed orders to produce results. That was the only way she could raise her worth, so she had lived only for this. She had been obsessed with not failing that she hadn't even thought about her opponents. She hadn't suffered under this feeling of responsibility she was feeling right now.

This was why she hadn't cared if her opponents hated her or cursed her. When she was killing her enemies on a mission, her enemies had been inorganic objects to her.

Now she was facing enemies, who had once been her allies....

She could no longer maintain her previous frame of mind.

“I killed him. I had no choice but to kill. I had to kill, but... I can't seem to forget him. I've never paid attention to my opponent's appearance or what kind of voice he had....”

“Mmm. Basically.... This is the first time you've viewed an enemy as a person.”

“....”

At Azell's words, Laura suddenly stopped her rambling. Her eyes widened a little as she looked at Azell.

Azell queried.

“Am I wrong?”

“Your words.... I think you are right.”

As a high ranked magician, Laura's intelligence was incredibly high. However, she was clumsy with her emotions. She was almost childlike in that way. After hearing Azell's words, she understood why she was upset.

When she was an officer within the Plain of Darkness, the

Dragon Demon king worshippers were a weapon she wielded. Her allies had been tools that was used by her. She never put much importance to them. She didn't even try to remember each of their names or faces.

However, she didn't think she could ever forget the magician she had killed this time around.

Azell spoke.

"Your situation is unique. It was inevitable since you lived under the same roof as them.."

"I lived under the same roof?"

"You don't know that idiom? I guess I can see how you might not know it."

In truth, Azell didn't know if the same idiom was being used in this era. At times, the people of this era used idioms that existed during the Dragon Demon war, and it was a refreshing experience for him. Then there were words and phrase that were new to him. Occasionally, a phrase left behind by someone he knew was quoted, and the feeling he felt was indescribable.

Anyways, he let such feeling flow off him as he spoke.

"You were part of a group that pursued the same goal, and they had become a form of family to you... Humans group together. If they aren't in a hostile relationship where killing is necessary, they gather in groups for the sake of profit. If some chooses to move to a different group, they are treated as traitors, and it caused them stress. The fact that you are upset is natural."

Azell had a similar experience before. It wasn't as extreme as what Laura was feeling right now, but he had to go through the process of coming to terms that people he hated and deserved to be killed were still people. It had been a shock to his system. At first, he saw enemies as just people he had to kill. However, as time passed, he realized the people he killed had family and friends. He

discovered that they were people, who enjoyed the mundane task of life....

‘For me, it was the Dragon Demons.’

When Azell was very young, he experienced his first kill by killing a bandit. That human deserved to die, so he didn’t experience any surprise like finding his humanity.

However, Dragon Demons were different. He had considered all of them to be enemies, but some Dragon Demons had become his allies. He had thought they were monsters that were completely different from humans. However, he discovered that they were very human in many ways. When he realized this fact, the shock he felt was indescribable.

As Azell thought about the old days, Laura asked him a question.

“What can I do?”

“Unfortunately, this isn’t a problem with a ready made remedy that’ll make you feel better. There are many problems in this world, and there are some like this one where you can’t do much about it.”

“I see.....”

Laura let out a sigh. Of course, she knew all of this. She had chosen her path in life, so she had to take responsibility for it.

She suddenly spoke.

“Do you remember the time when I told you about the elder I spoke to?”

“The nameless Dragon Demon, who managed to live through the Dragon Demon war?”

“Yes.”

“What about that bastard?”

“.....”

Laura looked over Azell. Of course, from Azell's perspective, the elder was merely a foe he would have to kill on sight. There was no reason for him to show respect to the elder. However, Laura couldn't help but feel displeasure at his words. The elder was one of the few beings that had consoled her heart.

A rare expression appeared on her constantly expressionless face, so Azell noticed what she was feeling. Azell let out a bitter laugh as he spoke.

"I understand you are irritated, but.... Even if Dragon Demon king Atein revives, I'll still call him a bastard. I don't plan on using an honorifics."

"I know. Now that I think about it, you will have to fight the elder in the future."

"I think so. However, according to your account, he was decrepit from old age. Will he be able to fight me?"

Laura hadn't gone into details about the elder. However, Azell had put two and two together to surmise that the Dragon Demon was old and infirm. He sounded like an outstanding magician, but he wouldn't have been able to free himself from the effects of his body.

'No. By the look of what they had done recently, maybe he will try to come back as an Undead? As a magician, his ability would be retained in its entirety. He'll be a powerful foe. He would lose his Dragon Demon magic, but a Dragon weapon can somewhat fix that deficiency of an Undead.....'

Azell worried about such real-life worries when Laura shook her head from side to side.

"No."

"Huh?"

"Whenever I met him, he was always in his seat, and he didn't move. However, it wasn't because he was decrepit. I'm sure he is

old, but it isn't as if he can't move. He is choosing not to move."

"So he is pretending to be decrepit?"

"Yes."

"Is there a reason why he went through all the trouble of trying to trick you? Ah, from what I heard up until now, the older generation within the Plain of Darkness seems to really hate giving information to the younger generation...."

"No, that isn't it.... I have a hunch that it is part of a magical rite."

"Is it a magic ritual that restricts movements? Mmm. Maybe, it is a method that forcefully suppresses his aging process."

"It is a possibility, but Azell..."

"What?"

"You really are like a magician. I wouldn't have thought a non-magician could come up with such a possibility...."

"Well, it is the fault of having a friend, who likes to give lectures."

Azell let out a bitter laugh. Carlos really liked talking about magic with Azell. This was why he had a lot of miscellaneous knowledge about magic even if he was only a Spirit Order practitioner.

Moreover, the knowledge he had gained was very useful in the Dragon Demon war. In certain situations, he knew what the enemy magicians could do. He was able to discern what they were going to do.

Azell spoke.

"Let's put that aside... What is up with that elder of yours?"

"He said these words to me. He said I will use my own will to find the worth of my own life, and I would have to brace myself to fight the whole world in the process."

“.....”

“I believe that person somehow foresaw that I would someday make this choice.”

Whenever Laura met the elder, she always had that thought. He was unusually sympathetic towards her, and he didn't try to indoctrinate her with fanatical views. He lived a very quiet life compared to the other survivors of the Dragon Demon war residing in the Plain of Darkness.

She had betrayed the Dragon Demon king worshippers now, and if there was one person she wanted to meet again, it was him. Now that she was out of the organization, she had more questions about him now.

Who was he?

Moreover, what was the purpose of hiding his identity?

Chapter 131 – Fallen Demon (1)

1

After they exited the border region, Azell's party moved carefully towards their destination. This location was known to be the habitat for Dragons, so they didn't want to draw the attention of the Dragons. As expected of a Dragon's habitat, there were a lot of monsters and beasts there. They had to thoroughly scout the area as they moved stealthily through the land. They avoided getting into a battle.

While they were making preparations to spend the night outside, Yuren asked a question.

“Wouldn't you like to do a Dragon Slayer's Ritual since we are here?”

“It isn't time yet.”

Azell shook his head from side to side. He was able to digest the Dragon's power faster through the new training method contained within the skill manual. However, he needed more time.

Yuren asked Leticia a question.

“What about you, Leticia?”

“You talk so easily about fighting one on one with a Dragon. You talk lightly of it as if it is a meeting between a young man and a young woman. If you think the Dragon Slayer's Ritual will be so profitable, why don't you do it?”

“In truth, I'm not too confident about it myself. Magicians are more disadvantaged against Dragons, and I have to work on getting proper control over my magical energy instead of gaining more Dragon Demon magic.....”

A black fog like energy emanated from Yuren's hand. At his core, Yuren was a Black magician. In truth, he used his magic more like

a traditional magician, but there was an ominous energy emanating from it. It was the energy of Black magic.

Moreover, his energy was overwhelming more ominous and denser compared to other Black magicians. The reason being he had learned a forbidden technique at the guidance of the guide. He had made a connection with the Demon.

The magical energy he earned by connecting to the Demon didn't disappear easily. It had increased Yuren's magical energy immensely, but at the same time, it was trying to take over his Energy Pulse. Demons wanted to corrupt humans. It allowed them to acquire souls. The Demons were able to eat away at the user's magical energy using the connection. There was a demonic will contained within it.

This was why Yuren always worked hard on suppressing the subversion. Recently, the training method from the manual relieved the burden by a notch. The participants gathered their magical energy, and the qualitative nature of the magical energy was synced. Then it imbued Dragon Demon magic to all the participants. This process had an effect of cleansing his magical energy.

Laura spoke.

"You are quite good at using such a dangerous power. That method is forbidden even for those who seek out Black magic."

"...well, your words are true. Somehow, I feel aggrieved at hearing those words from you?"

"Why?"

Laura tilted her head in confusion. She couldn't understand what he was trying to say. Yuren clicked his tongue as if he couldn't believe her words.

"Don't you know why? The Plain of Darkness tried to make someone like me artificially. I thought all their attempts had all

been unsuccessful, but....”

As he spoke, Yuren’s eyes naturally started to turn towards someone. He quickly stopped himself. Leticia spoke in a lukewarm manner.

“You don’t have to be considerate of me. It is unnecessary.”

“Ah, no. It’s....”

“I’ve never told you about it, so I won’t ask you how you know.... In truth, the answer is obvious. You are a crazy person, who had voluntarily called up a Demon, to make a connection with it. You knew we were tarred with the same brush.”

At her words, Laura asked in surprise.

“You also have a connection with the Demon race?”

“The fact that I have to hear those words from you makes me mad, but.... Yes. If seen in a certain light, you are like me as well as Jeffers Almarick.”

Leticia let out a bitter laugh. She had betrayed the Dragon Demon king worshippers as a Dragon Majin, because they had experimented on her with Black magic. She spoke about her past in a calm manner.

“It isn’t some incredible story. The Aunsaurus family worked toward making the final product in you, Laura Aunsaurus. The Almarick family did something similar. However, they chose to make the children in a more organic manner.”

“What do you mean?”

“It is as I’ve said. The men of the Almarick slept with many human women and female Dragon Majins. They required these women to have multiple babies.”

“.....”

If heard in passing, one would think it was a natural attempt at propagating their line. However, Leticia knew the details, so she

knew the process wasn't as benign as it sounded.

“A lot of women were needed to acquire over 100 children. The women were from all over the place. There were the villagers from within the Plain of Darkness, test subjects from outside, kidnapped women.... They were all turned into tools by the Almarick family in an attempt create the child they desired.”

Leticia had no idea who her mother was. The Almarick family separated the children from their mothers before they were weaned. She found this out later, but the Almarick family had no intentions of letting the information of what they were doing leak out to the outside. Magic was used to destroy the minds of the women from the beginning. Their bodies were modified, so they were able ‘produce’ as many children as possible. Afterwards, they were all ‘disposed’.

“...we had no idea about the truth. The children lived on in an attempt to become the ideal heir to Almarick. The education we received was quite severe.”

As the education progressed further, the number of children inevitably shrunk. There were those killed during training sessions or experiments. Then there were those that were labeled as failures. They disappeared to be never seen again. At the time, she hadn't known what they did with the children, who had failed. Now she knew.

“I was also a failed product.”

The dropouts were sent to a Black magic research facility, and they became test subjects. Leticia had been one of them.

The tests that was performed on her was brutal. The training to become the heir was inhumane, but as a test subject for the Black magic experiments, the fact that they were living beings with personalities was ignored.

“...however, I couldn't escape.”

The test subjects were under perfect surveillance, and they went through hell on a daily basis. Even the act of running away through death wasn't allowed. It was a Black magic research lab, so it was normal for them to toy with death. Death wasn't the end. One suffered more painfully in death. This truth was told to them by demons.... They were basically living within the lowest floor of hell.

Before she knew it, she was staring into the campfire, and her voice shook slightly. She always looked cold on the outside, but there were stacks of memories deep down within her. The memories of pain and fear generated the hate and hostility she felt towards the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

“I was able to escape from that place, because they were covetous of the power of Demons.”

The Black magic research facility within the Plain of Dark used test subjects as sacrificial lambs. They were given to the Demon race in an attempt to gain more knowledge. They were persistent in their pursuit. They even took a step beyond what was acceptable. They performed banned experiments by connecting test subjects to Demons.

“As you've seen from this guy, it was determined that one can gain immense power through this crazy process. However, there were no cases of success.”

At the very least, there had been none until Leticia came along.

The Demon race coveted the souls of humans. However, once the connection was made, the Demon didn't try to take over the body. The Demon soon destroyed the body. The hail of evil destroyed the mind, and the body followed. Those killed in such a way couldn't be raised as an Undead.

“However, the process succeeded in me. I don't know why it succeeded. I was connected to a Demon, but my case looks different from what Yuren did. There might be a different

explanation.”

On the first experiment, the connection lasted 10 seconds before it dissolved. Leticia’s mind and body remained intact.

Of course, the researchers readied a second experiment. Up until that point, there were less than 10 subjects, who was able to achieve the same result as Leticia. She became a really valuable test subject.

The result of the second test was surprising. The connection was maintained for three minutes yet nothing happened. Normally, the longer period of exposure in the second experiment inevitably led to the destruction of the test subjects. Leticia was able to maintain a longer connection, and she was able to withstand it until the connection was severed.

The researchers were happy. They shouted in joy when they finally achieved the result they had desired....

They immediately became pillars of ice.

“When I look back at it.... I’ve never felt so wronged as what I experience at that moment.”

She had received all kinds of torment from them. However, she had given them a clean death before she could exact a proper revenge.

An enormous change occurred when she was connected to a Demon twice. The Demon was gone, but the evil magical energy remained behind. It was overflowing within her. It had destroyed every mechanism that had been placed to restrain her. Her Dragon Demon magic had also received a boost, so she was able to use the power of ice as easily as breathing. She exceeded most Dragon Majin in terms of power.

“...however, I didn’t connect to the Demon on purpose like Yuren. I never want to experience it again.”

“It isn’t as if I did it because I wanted to. I had no choice.”

Yuren grumbled.

The connection he formed with the Demon race was a trump card he had learned from the guide within his dreams. He hadn't wanted to use it unless it was absolutely necessary. The burden of controlling such a technique was too high.

He used his rationality and senses to create his magic spell, yet it felt as if a foreign agent was destroying his heart with evil. That overwhelming power was being provided to him, but it felt as if his Energy Pulse, which extended to his entire body, was crawling with maggots. It was a horrifying feeling as if it was eating him alive from the inside..

Leticia, who had been looking at Yuren with displeasure, turned to Azell. She suddenly asked him a question.

"I have a question I want to ask at this time, Azell Zestringer."

"What do you want to know?"

"You don't have to be so enthused about answering my question. I didn't reveal my past as a chip to gain information from you. I just...."

Leticia smirked as if she was a little bit baffled at what she was about to say.

"If it is you all, I thought I could talk to you guys about it. The bastards from the Plain of Darkness already knows about my past, so it doesn't feel too bad to know that the people I chose as comrades knows about it too."

In the beginning, she had balked when she was questioned by Azell about her past. However, as she traveled with them, the wall she had put up came down.

After she had betrayed the Dragon Demon King worshippers, she had always been alone except for the time when she received instruction from her teacher. She had been in the grips of madness when her teacher taught her how to live as a decent being. After

she separated from her teacher, she hadn't gotten close to any one. She only thought about fighting the Dragon Demon King worshippers.

However, a change occurred inside her heart when she met Yuren. She had overcome hardship with him, and she was able to meet Azell Zestringer. She had comrades, who shared the same purpose as her.

Leticia asked a question.

"As a person who experienced the Dragon Slayer's Ritual, do you think I will be able to do the Dragon Slayer's Ritual?"

"It is possible."

Azell didn't even have to think about it before he gave his answer.

"Hmm. If that is your assessment...."

"However, there is always a risk of one losing one's life in a Dragon Slayer's Ritual. The fact that one possesses the skill to succeed doesn't guarantee that one would succeed in it. As the challenger grows in Dragon Demon magic, the Dragon becomes stronger too. You have to remember that point."

"I'm not naive. I won't try to eat the world raw."

Leticia snorted.

Chapter 132 – Fallen Demon (2)

2

The next morning arrived, and the party departed when the sun started to come out. Moreover, they were able to arrive at their destination when the sun was high up in the sky.

Yuren, who had been walking from the front, spoke.

“We are here.”

“Mmm?”

All the party members had a queer expression on their faces.

There was a marsh made out of mud in front of their eyes. It was a bit too in-your-face to be a naturally formed marsh. It was as if corpses were gathered and turned into mulch in this location throughout the years. There was a dense noxious fume emanating from it.

Azell asked him a question.

“It’s within this marsh?”

“According to the words of the guide, it’s here.”

“Hmm. How do we open the door?”

“The door is within there.”

“...are you perhaps trying to say we have to dive into the marsh?”

“I believe so.”

“.....”

“Don’t worry. I might have a way. The marsh isn’t that deep, so I’ll use my barrier as we head below....”

“It’s all right. I’ll do it..”

Azell let out a sigh as he stepped forward. Yuren asked him a question.

“What are you going to do?”

-Rise Dragon Weapon, Vitan's Chalice.

Instead of answering his question, Azell brought out the Vitan's Chalice. It was as if a lightning had planted itself in front of him. A transparent staff made out of glass was held within his hand. Dragon Demon magic poured out of Azell.

“Path of Tears.”

Ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh.....

The surrounding space looked distorted as if one was looking through a drop of water. This distortion gathered in front of Azell, and it turned into a large pocket of air. It extended forward from him as it entered into the marsh.

“All right. Is it around 10 meters deep?”

After a brief amount of time, there was a path leading down into the marsh. The distortion of air had created a path within the marsh.

Azell spoke as he walked in.

“Everyone follow me.”

“...what is this?”

Laura asked in surprise. She had been the original owner of the Vitan's Chalice, yet she hadn't known how to use it properly.

Azell answered her.

“The Dimensional distortion field can be focused into a limited space to create a shape one desires. Even if it was a volcano overflowing with magma, I could go in. The heat won't affect me.”

In truth, these were feats performed by Aunsaurus in front of Azell during the Dragon Demon war. Azell had used the time on this journey to go over his memories, and he worked on replicating the feats performed by Aunsaurus using the Vitan's Chalice. The

Path of Tears was one of the results of his efforts.

Yuren spoke as if he was dumbfounded.

“This is a complete cheat.”

“The performance of the Dragon Weapon called the Vitan’s Chalice can be described as a cheat. The Dimensional Distortion can be controlled by constructing an image in one’s mind. This is why its usefulness can’t be measured through common sense.”

They followed the Path of Tears to arrive at the bottom of the marsh, and there found a stone gate. It was clearly a man-made stone door. As soon as the party arrived at the bottom, the door opened, and a very dark hallway was revealed.

Koo-roo-roo-roong!

When all the party members entered, the door closed. Yuren spoke.

“There are no traps here, so we can just head in.”

“Mmm? Why is it so lax in security?”

The marsh was a troublesome barrier, but a high level magician would be able to break through it easily. Yuren spoke.

“I think the defense differs depending on who’s the intruder. I think it won’t be a problem since you are here.”

“There aren’t any signs that we are being probed by magic....”

“I concur. Since the guide said so, shouldn’t we just assume it to be true?”

“...it isn’t good to trust blindly. Just look around a little bit.”

“I agree with that sentiment. Still, it feels as if we are doing unnecessary work.

Yuren grumbled, but he diligently searched for magic traps. It happened at that moment.

<...you are the customer I have been waiting for.>

A bleak voice rang out from down the hallway. It was a voice that sent a chill running up one's spine.

At the same time, the hallway brightened. There were magic lights placed along the hallway, and the desolate sight of the hallway was revealed. It had been neglected over the long years.

Azell mumbled to himself.

“Is it an Undead?”

<Since you've entered this path without much difficulty, I assumed right. You guys are the customers I've been waiting for.>

“There is only one path.”

<If you guys weren't the ones I've been waiting for, you would have been bombarded by a prodigious amount of magic. You would have only been able to hear my voice after you escaped from the throes of death. Then you would have arrived at this structure, which was created to be a maze.>

“A maze...”

<You don't have to be worried. Since you are already on this path, you'll be able to meet me soon.>

“Your credibility is plummeting really fast....”

Koo-roo-roo-roong.....!

Azell was becoming wary when he felt a faint rumbling. Everyone flinched as they looked at their surrounding.

Azell assessed the situation.

“The hallway itself is moving.”

<That's right. This place moves endlessly to restructure itself.>

As if to prove his words, a wall cut through the hallway. No, it was more accurate to say that the wall slid by. The wall moved at high speed as the hallway was revealed again. Then several wall started to move, and he thought he glimpsed the sight of several

gears and other mechanisms... The configuration kept changing in front of them, and they finally arrived at a room.

Koo-goo-goong.....

The vibration ceased. A large and desolate room greeted them. There really was nothing here except for an Undead wearing a hood. It was sitting on a stone platform in the middle of the room. It was sitting in the lotus position. Its flesh had already rotted away, so only its skeleton remained. There was a ghostly fire burning within its eye sockets.

When he saw this, Azell felt a chill. There was soft magical energy emanating from it, and it had a familiar ominous stench to it.

‘Demon?’

It felt similar to the magical energy gained by Yuren when he had connected to a Demon.

Suddenly, Yuren spoke.

“You are sealed here.”

<Yes, I can’t exit this small space.>

As the Undead spoke, it raised its hand into the air.

The hand reached a certain point, and.....

Pah-jee-jee-jee-jee!

A fierce spark erupted to repel the hand. The finger bones became charred as smoke emanated from it. Fragments of bone fell off.

However, this lasted only for a moment. It was as if time had run in reverse. The damaged hand was restored. The charred bone fragments turned white, and it started to attach themselves back to whence they came from.

THE Undead shrugged its shoulders as it spoke.

<I cannot die either.>

There was a black blood magic circle on the floor. It had complicated geometric shapes, and it was filled with magic characters. It created a powerful magical barrier that was confining the Undead.

<It also has the power of protecting my mind, so I cannot go mad either. It is the worst prison with no avenue of exit. All i can do is think as I struggle through the loneliness. That is why it is really great to see you guys. Could you perhaps tell me how long of a time has passed outside?>

“How would we know such an answer when you ask it totally out of the blue?”

<Ah. It seems you need a frame of reference. I was locked around 100 years before what the humans called the Dragon Demon war occurred.>

“If we are using that as reference, it has been 223 years since the Dragon Demon war had ended.”

<It has been a long time. I cannot believe it has been 300 years since I’ve gained this withered body.>

“What do you mean?”

<When I was sealed here, I wasn’t an Undead yet. I was alive, since I inhabited the body of a human. I couldn’t exit this place, and I couldn’t acquire any food. My body became weak, and in the end, I died. I had to watch the process of myself rot away. I would have preferred to have gone mad, but that choice wasn’t made available to me. Oh. I feel a chill run up my body when I think about it again. Even this is a pale imitation of what I used to be. The pain and the fear is now etched into my soul. It really was nasty....>

“.....”

The Undead shuddered as it spoke. The party members, who

listening to it, gulped.

It was a brief summary, but it sounded like a cruel punishment. Who was this Undead? Who did it piss off to be pushed into the pits of hell alive?

<I hope you understand why I'm so chatty right now. As I've said before, I've been here for over 200 years. I watched myself die and rot away. This is why you don't make a deal with a Demon. Of course, the problem is I'm the Demon.>

“What do you mean?”

<Do you perhaps know about the name Balserk? It has been a long time, so I might have been forgotten.....>

At its words, the party members looked at each other. However, they didn't know the name. Kairen, who had lived a long time, didn't know it. Laura, who had lived inside the Plain of Darkness, also didn't know the name.

There was one exception. Azell looked at the Undead with a surprised expression on his face.

“Are you talking about the Demon King Balserk?”

<Oh, yes. I guess I wasn't completely forgotten in history. Young people these days must not be studying up on their history. Since there were magicians amongst you, I had high hopes. Instead a youth who's not a magician....>

“Of course, people don't know that name. After the Dragon Demon war, Dragon Demon king Atein's name overshadowed all the dark figures in history. They were deemed inconsequential compared to Atein. The name recognition of Balserk is probably lower than the lowest ranked general of the Dragon Demon army. You've been obsolete for a very long time.”

<...after my body became like this, I thought I would never have the occasion to be wounded again. I was wrong.>

The Undead grumbled to itself.

Azell asked it a question.

“I’m just telling you the objective truth..... Does this mean you are Balserk?”

<You are correct. Back in my days....>

“You are the Demon King, who caused a million deaths in the Yudusk kingdom.”

Yudusk was one of the seven kingdoms fighting for supremacy over the continent right now. The kingdom was located north, and it bordered the Plain of Darkness. Even during the Nadick empire, this kingdom had possessed the most land. This remained true even 220 years after the Dragon Demon war had ended. Their royal bloodline also remained unbroken, so they had the deepest history. This was also why their social structure was antiquated. There were only two amongst the seven kingdoms that still allowed slavery. Yudusk was one of the two.

“Moreover... You are the one that deepened our knowledge of the Demon race.”

Azell thought about the story he heard from Carlos.

3

Before the Dragon Demon war, humans didn’t know much about the Demon race. In truth, it wasn’t as if people had a better understanding of them now. However, in the past, it was pretty much a blank slate.

At the time, Carlos insisted on making contact with the Demon race. He thought it was a solution to their hopeless situation. This was why he continued to scrap together more knowledge about the Demon race.

Carlos spoke.

“The awareness of the Demon race can be divided into before and

after the appearance of the Demon King Balserk.”

“Why? Actually, I don’t think I’ve even heard of the Demon King Balserk.”

“The world is large. He was famous in the north. It is understandable that people, who aren’t from that region, don’t know about him.”

“Everyone knows who Atein is.”

“On top of that, everyone knows the four Dragon Demon Generals. This is why they are considered to be incredible. It isn’t an exaggeration to call them the strongest beings in history.”

Carlos snorted as he continued to speak.

“If you were from Yudusk, the name of Balserk would have struck fear in you. When one mentions the Demon King, everyone thinks about Atein first. However, the people of Yudusk would think about Balserk first.”

The Demon race didn’t exert their evil onto society before Balserk’s appearance. Demons were seen as beings from legends, and the civilians didn’t believe that they were real. The only ones that knew about them were Black Magicians, who voluntarily entered into the Swamp of Destruction to seek knowledge and power.

“Everyone that was called Demon King in history all possessed a real body. Most of them had an intimate relations with Black magic.”

There were some that thought they would be able to acquire great power by approaching the Demon race. However, there hadn’t been any cases where a Demon went out of its way to harm humans. None had tried to achieve notoriety until Balserk.

Balserk was an outlier.

“To the best of my knowledge, Demons do not have names.”

Carlos had already met a lot of Demons. He called them up, and he walked the tightrope to gain power. This resulted in Carlos becoming a caliber of magician that even surprised the Dragon Demon Generals.

“However, a Demon that wanted to be called Balserk made its appearance. Creatures, who possessed great power in darkness, started to appear within the borders of Yudusk. A great calamity arrived in the region, and the name of Balserk gained notoriety.....”

Balserk was like black curtain covering the region. All the people, who were called heroes at the time, were systematically killing the beings that were causing trouble. However, they couldn't locate Balserk.

“As time passed, someone figured out the truth. Balserk was a Demon, who didn't have a real body.”

The process was very long and complex. The story of Balserk's rise and end is known more to the people of Yudusk compared to any other heroic tales. It would take him forever to explain everything, so Carlos gave a summarized version.

“In the end, Balserk was caught and he was deposed. The hub of the chaos was gone, but peace didn't return immediately... Afterwards, there was a period of 10 years where chaos reigned. A lot of blood flowed during this time.”

“That summary is quite lackluster.”

“You want to listen to the whole story?”

“Of course not. I'm past the age where my eyes would shine from hearing an old story.”

“Then shut up and listen. There's a problem in this story. How did they depose Balserk?”

“Mmm?”

“Demons don’t have bodies. This is why it is impossible to kill them.”

“Is that so? However, aren’t there cases where the Demon and a Black magician merges?”

“It has been done before, but it just amounts to the Black magician receiving a several dozen seconds of uncontrolled boost before the host goes crazy. Moreover, it doesn’t mean the Demon is killed when the Black Magician is killed.”

Black magicians usually didn’t think about the aftermath of their actions, so there were cases where they made a deal with a Demon to merge with them. The benefit lasted only for couple seconds. At most, the Black magician would have this surprising power for several dozen seconds before being destroyed.

Unbeknownst to the two of them at the time, an exception would show up later. Yuren was surprisingly able to control the power he gained after connecting with a Demon.

Carlos spoke.

“Basically, magicians need an address.”

“Address?”

“There are countless number of Demons, and they all have no name. If one performed the Demon summoning ritual, a different Demon would show up each time. The summoner has to have a method to bring out a Demon, who has the specific knowledge that one needs....”

It was unknown as to how the Demon race had acquired their knowledge, but they weren’t all knowing. Each Demon possessed different knowledge.

“First, you have to find a suitable Demon to deal with. Then you need a way to summon them, and a contract is formed. Then the methodology needed for the Demon to find the magician is established. The magician also needs a way that would allow them

to call out a specific Demon. Black magicians puts a lot of value on the Demon Codex.”

A trial and error was needed to summon the right Demon. This process was very dangerous, so the Demon Codex containing knowledge about different Demons were coveted by Black magicians.

“When the Black magician connected to the Demon is killed, the Demon cannot cut through the line to come to this world. The knowledge of summoning this specific Demon would fade from the world. That’s it. Demons do not have a real body, so they cannot die.”

“If that is so, I’m assuming Balserk had formed contracts with numerous beings. Since he is gone, are you saying all the people, who knows how to call out Balserk is dead?”

“Maybe. However, that explanation doesn’t feel right. The situation surrounding Balserk was an oddity. Even if there were countless tales about heroes taking down the dark beings, the existence of Demons became known to the public. The reason why Demons were dangerous became known. That part is a bit strange.”

“What about it?”

“The knowledge of magicians aren’t usually shared with the masses like this. The truth about the Demon race was spread through the story of Demon King Balserk. This knowledge was something that was guarded zealously by the Black magicians. Even if a knowledge was revealed to the public, there are parts that should have been redacted.”

Above all, an unprecedented number of people found out about the Demon race through this story. Basically...

“It means there would be more people, who would covet the power and knowledge. They would try to contact the Demon race.”

This was why Balserk was the true Demon King. It purposefully spread the knowledge of the Demon race to entice more people down the path of destruction....

Chapter 133 – Fallen Demon (3)

4

Back to the present.

The air was cold. At least, this 200 year old ruin had good ventilation. They had no trouble breathing. However, the cold air that was emitted from the Undead in front of them was making the temperature of the room drop slightly.

Azell thought about the old stories as he looked at the Undead claiming to be the Demon King Balserk. He asked it a question.

“If you really are Balserk, I have couple questions I want to ask you....”

<You can ask me anything. I exist here to answer your questions.>

“That really sounds like something a Demon would say.”

<No, I don’t mean it like that. It is as I’ve said. I am here to answer your questions. I was placed here for that exact purpose. To be precise, it was....arranged to be this way.>

“What?”

Azell was surprised.

Balserk tapped its finger on its head as it spoke. Its fingers were all bones.

<It was made so that I couldn’t renew myself anymore. I was imprisoned here with my knowledge intact, so I could pass it onto a suitable person. You can ask me anything. If I can answer it, I will. Everything about me ceased to move forward around 300 years ago, so I can’t give you any fresh information.>

Azell furrowed his brows. Was this something arranged by Carlos? However, the facts didn’t add up.

‘The foremost problem is when it was imprisoned. What is going on?’

The guide had revealed the second gift, and it was something clearly left behind by Carlos. However, this one seemed to have no connection with Carlos.

Azell hid his confusion as he spoke.

“You claim to be a Demon. So how am I supposed to trust your words?”

<You seem to know much about the Demon race, yet you speak such words? Demons can’t lie.>

“However, they subtly bend the truth to lead others down the path of destruction. First, I have a hard time believing you are a Demon.”

<Why?>

“Demons are existences with no real body. So how can one become an Undead?”

<That is a pertinent question. Before I became like this, I thought it was impossible too. Since

you already know a little bit about me and the Demon race... Weren’t you a bit suspicious about the story that was being told about my demise?>

“Are you talking about how a Demon without a corporeal form was killed?”

<That’s right.>

“My friend had a theory that even the Demon King’s demise was part of its plan.”

<Ho-oh. That is an interesting story. Could you go into further details?>

“Basically, Balserk was an existence that someone summoned in

an attempt to make the world realize the existence of the Demon Race, and the danger they posed....that was his interpretation. Well, it sounds like a crazy plan, but we are talking about a being, who upended the world. So the crazy seems likely.”

<Ha ha ha. So the disappearance of the Demon King was intentional? It’s a fun conspiracy theory. Unfortunately, he was wrong. There was someone superior to me roaming this world, and I was caught by him. He imprisoned me. He had knowledge that the Demon race didn’t know about, and he had the ability to use that knowledge. I was put in a living human being. I was able to to feel pain and the depth of despair that can only be felt by the living....>

“Who was it?”

<I’m not in a position where I can tell you that. I want to tell you, but unfortunately, I’m prohibited from telling you. I really hope you realize that I am sincere. Usually, Demons like to speak and preen. I’m not sure if I can call myself a Demon anymore... Ah. Ah. The fact that I’m able to speak to someone is a good thing. This is fun, and it makes me happy. I want to do anything for you, who makes me feel this happy. Is this perhaps....>

Balserk spoke after he went over its thoughts for a moment.

<Is it love?>

“...probably not.”

<However, if we go by the definition of love, I think the emotion I’m feeling is love.>

“If that is true, it is unfortunate. I cannot reciprocate your love.”

Azell furrowed his brows. A Demon King, who left his name in history, was talking such nonsense.

Still, he could understand why it was happy.

It wasn’t a false assertion when it said that it was happy just to

have a conversation with him. It's mental wave was flowing out unfiltered, and it confirmed the veracity of the Balserk's words.

<That is sad to hear. Well, it is said that first love is never realized. All right. Let us continue to exchange questions and answers.>

“If it is as you've said, the person that put you in this predicament probably had a grudge against you. That kind of person left something behind for me.... How can I trust such a person?”

<A grudge? He might have had one. Please believe me. That is my only request. I'll tell you everything. I have to fulfill my duty.>

“What do you gain from doing so?”

<Death.>

“.....”

<I can't do anything anymore. I can't get out of here. I cannot die, and I can't even go mad. This place is my own personal hell. I just want to be released from it. I can achieve that goal by fulfilling the task I was given. Shall we do an experiment? Get me to tell a lie.>

“Are you really the Demon King Balserk?”

<Nope. Everything I've said before is a lie. In truth, I'm.....>

Suddenly, the light in Balserk's eyes disappeared. Azell stepped back in surprise.

“What the hell is this.”

At the same time as Azell mumbled to himself, all the bones making up Balserk's body fell to the floor. Yuren was taken aback.

“There were no warning... The magical energy forming the Undead just disappeared.”

The Undead was already dead, and a foul technique was used to

tie the soul down to the body. Basically, if the magical energy that was maintaining the spell disappeared, the soul could no longer remain in this plane of existence. Basically, the nucleus of the Undead would be gone.

However, something strange was going on here. The fact that one was able to become an Undead meant one had a soul that possessed a strong will or a lot of resentment. It would linger around for awhile upon its destruction like a ghost....

However, it had been snuffed out like a candle?

Doo-roo-rook.....

It happened at that moment. Within the shock and silence...

The fallen bones started to move.

It was as time was being rewound. The bones, which had fallen in a disorderly manner, rose into the air. They reassembled to form the skeleton of a human. After the process ended, the phantom fire started to burn with the skull, and the uneasy magical energy forming the Undead started to emit an ominous magical wave.

<Hah.....>

A tormented sound came out of the skeleton's mouth.

<I would have preferred death to that. The time.... Uh? How much time has passed?>

Balserk asked with a trembling voice. It was as if it couldn't think straight, because of the fear it was feeling. Everyone was confused by this fact. Azell answered the question.

"It wasn't even a minute.."

<Only... It was only about... I was sent into the emptiness, and you guys only....>

Balserk hugged its body with both arms. It looked as if it was feeling cold, but the cold didn't affect the Undead.

It took awhile before it calmed down.

Balserk spoke.

<...if I break one of the rules set by that bastard, I would suffer that fate. I cannot lie at all. If I do, I'm shut in an emptiness where I cannot perceive anything. Even my senses doesn't exist at all. I even start to doubt if my thoughts exist. You don't know how awful it is.....>

“What will you say if I said you are putting up a pretty good acting performance?”

<Then.....>

At Azell's cold question, Balserk answered with a trembling voice.

<It'll be unfortunate. That means anything I say won't be believed. I don't care if you believe me or not. I would have to beg for you to just hear me out.>

“.....”

It's words were plaintive. It had revealed itself to be a Demon King, who once caused massive chaos in the world. Now it was in a situation where it was begging them to just listen to its words. It didn't even care if its words were taken as the truth.

However, Azell's eyes were cold.

If its words were to be believe, it had suffered a very cruel fate. Death through torture seemed like a kinder fate. It was a through violation of its soul.

Still, he decided to think further on it. How much chaos and destruction was caused by the Demon King Balserk?

What is this was done by someone, who had a unfathomable hatred for the Demon King? If so, would this be considered excessive?

‘It isn't up for me to decide that.....’

Azell stopped thinking about it as he spoke to it.

“All right. You are the Demon King Balserk, and you have words you have to deliver to me. I’ll believe you for now. I’ll just how useful your information is after I hear it.”

<Thank you very much.>

There wasn’t a single drop of sarcasm in his words. The other party members excluding Azell looked at each other in confusion.

Azell asked a question.

“Then let me ask you this first. Someone imprisoned you, and someone wanted you to give me a message. Are they the same person?”

“Uh?”

Yuren’s eyes became wide. Azell was able to identify and ask the question that was at the heart of the confusion. Balserk gave an answer.

<No.>

“As I’ve expected. Then are you able to tell me the identity of the person, who arranged all of this?”

<I also cannot speak about him.>

“Hmm. So both of them didn’t want their identity known? Yet they wanted some important truth to be know.... Is the knowledge you possess something that can be known to anyone?”

<That’s right. Let’s put aside the discussion for now as to whether it is useful or not. This isn’t a secret that can’t be disseminated. However, most Demons do not know about this knowledge, so it is high in scarcity value.>

“I see. It makes me more curious as to who’s playing this mischief on me.... Ah, I have one more question regarding him. Was the person, who arranged all of this, a human magician?”

<That's right. Yes, he was at a caliber where it was hard to believe he was a human magician.>

"I see."

Azell's expression turned serious. It was a useful clue in figuring out, who the guid was.

"All right. Then..."

Azell thought for a brief moment before he asked the question.

"What did he want you to tell me? "

When Balserk's existence was found out to be arranged by the guide, Azell knew the truth that would be told to him was set from the beginning. If he couldn't ask for the guide's identity, he was just going to ask only for the pertinent information.

Yuren was surprised, so he joined the conversation.

"Uh. Wait a moment."

"Why?"

"If one read between the lines of what it said, wouldn't it be released after telling you the message?"

"Isn't it so, Balserk?"

<I believe so.>

When Balserk answered in the affirmative, Yuren was put in a sticky situation.

"Let's ask that question later. I have couple things I want to ask it. If Demon King Balserk was so amazing, he must have been a big figure within the Demon race. Even if it is knowledge 300 years out of date, it probably possesses knowledge that's worth a lot..... It might be the break we need to increase our power in groundbreaking fashion."

"Hmm. I can see why you feel that way as a magician."

"Shouldn't it be the same for you? The knowledge of the Demon

race isn't only useful to magicians.....”

“You are right, but I don't want to risk my life on a baseless information given to us by some unknown being. I can see why this Demon is attractive to magicians. It presents itself as a Demon that won't lead others down the path of destruction.”

Azell took a glance, and it seemed Laura was showing some interest too. She didn't reveal her feelings through her expression, but there was a light in her eyes as if she was itching to ask it a question.

“All right. Let me express my apology to your first, Balserk. It seems your liberation will have to be pushed to a later time.”

<It doesn't matter to me. The fact that I'm able to converse with someone brings me great joy. I'll think of it as entertainment before this lowly being meets its end. Even this is too good for me.>

Azell retreated, so Yuren and Laura could converse with Balserk. He sat in a corner as he spoke.

“We should meditate. I'm pretty sure this will be long and boring. Since there's no time restriction, this might go on for several days.”

“Mmm.”

At those words, Kairen and Leticia let out a groan. As expected, when the two high ranked magician started to converse with Balserk, their words sounded like alien words to the two swordsmen. Laura, who was normally quiet, was asking various questions with a twinkle in her eyes. They could already tell the waiting period would be long and tortuous.

However, the wait was unexpectedly short.

Koo-roo-roong.....!

Only an hour had passed when an explosion from the surface shook the ruin.

Chapter 134 – Fallen Demon (4)

5

Azell immediately opened his eyes.

The explosion had occurred from a very far distance. If he went up to the surface, the explosion would have occurred about 2 kilometers away. However, the explosion was powerful enough to deliver a shockwave to their location.

Azell spoke.

“It’s a Dragon.”

“How do you know that?”

Leticia asked him a question. Azell answered her.

“We were told an Earth Dragon lives nearby. I can feel the power of an Earth Dragon.”

Azell had a wealth of experience at fighting against Dragons. Azell was underground, but he was able to use his Absolute Sense to identify the power being used on the surface. Soon, the intermittent rumble turned into a powerful tremor.

Koo-roo-roong.....!

Everyone had to admit Azell was right. The powerful magical wave assaulted the senses of the party members, who were still underneath the surface. It was undeniable that the source was a Dragon’s Roar.

Azell spoke.

“The Dragon is fighting something. The opponent is strong enough where a Dragon had to use a Dragon’s Roar.....”

He couldn’t feel the energy of another Dragon, so it wasn’t a fight between Dragons. Azell focused a bit more to expand his senses. Soon, he was able to zero in on a very fierce fluctuation of power

that was weaker than the Dragon.

“It seems either a Dragon Majin or a Dragon Demon is fighting against the Dragon. It is a one on one fight. By the look of it, I don’t have a good feeling about this.”

“There is a high probability that it’s an officer from the Plain of Darkness attempting the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.”

Leticia spoke with a cold voice. She couldn’t think of any other possibilities.

Azell spoke.

“It seems Balseru was right. In the end, they caught scent of our tracks, and they’ve pursued us.”

“We did show ourselves at the border, so it was inevitable.”

At Kairen’s words, Azell tilted his head in puzzlement.

“Still, this is way too fast. No, wait a moment. They might not have pinpointed our location. They might have decided to conduct a Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, since they were nearby....”

Koo-roo-roo-roong!

At that moment, a powerful tremor was felt by the party. It was like an earthquake. It shook so fiercely that it wouldn’t have been strange to see the ruin crumble. This fact made everyone’s hair stand on end. Since they were underground, the destruction of the ruin would bury them. They would be helpless.

Azell grinded his teeth.

“Koohk! It seems we’ve been found. They are being quite bold. Let us all head out immediately! If we stay here, we’ll be buried!”

“But....”

Yuren was taken aback, so he turned to look at Balserk. They still hadn’t heard the knowledge that was tasked to be delivered to them by Balserk.

Koo-goo-goo-goong!

However, they had run out of time. Another explosion went off on the surface as the aftershock rocked the ground. It was clear that their enemies were aiming for them, who were underneath the surface of the ground.

Azell spoke.

“Everyone get out first. I’ll stay behind to listen to the message.”

“Are you crazy? Even if it is you, you will die here if this place craters.”

Instead of answering Yuren’s words, he raised his Dragon Demon magic.

-Rise Dragon Weapon! Vitan’s Chalice!

The light dispersed as the Vitan’s Chalice appeared next to Azell. Azell spoke as he pointed at it.

“Since I have this, I don’t have to worry about that occurring. Since our location was found, there is a high probability that they’ve also found the entrance. I’ll create a path where you’ll be able to come out through a roundabout manner. Get ready for battle.”

Azell immediately used the power of the Vitan’s Chalice to create the Path of Tears. The tear-like distortion gathered in a single location before it started to extend forward. It created a hole in the ceiling. It was as if the physical wall was non-existent in front of dimensional distortion.

“Then let us go make a scene first.”

As Leticia spoke those words, she kicked off the ground to jump upwards. Kairen immediately followed behind her. Yuren and Laura looked back at Balserk with regret before they flew into the air.

When Azell was alone with Balserk, he asked it a question..

“Since we don’t have much time, I’ll just listen only to the pertinent information. What do you have to tell me?”

<I wanted my end to come... Now that I’m staring it in the face, I do feel a bit of regret. It’s a funny thing.>

Balserk laughed in its skeletal form. Then it spoke.

<However, I can’t pass up this opportunity, so let’s end this.>

“Stop beating around the bush. I don’t have the time to wait this out. Hurry up and speak.”

<All right. What I have to tell you is....>

Balserk spoke with a bitter voice.

<The truth about the Demon race.>

Countless magicians over the ages had puzzled over this topic. One of the secrets of this world was about to be unraveled in front of Azell.

6

Kairen had followed the Path of Tears to arrive at the surface, and he took stock of his current location. He furrowed his brows when he realized there was a battle going on around 500 meters away.

‘It’s the Guardian Shadows.’

There were several dozen Guardian Shadows fighting fiercely against the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

Balseru had continued to follow Azell’s party, and they had clashed against the Dragon Demon king worshippers, who had been assaulting the entrance of the ruin. Kairen couldn’t tell how many of Dragon Demon king worshippers were here, but it seemed the Guardian Shadows weren’t willing to turn a blind eye.

Kairen spoke.

“Let’s go!”

The party immediately rushed towards the battlefield. However, it happened at that moment.

A clear pillar of light rose up into the air in the middle of the battlefield. The clear light didn't hurt the eyes, but it weirdly drew one's eyes towards it. Moreover....

Ggwah-gwa-gwa-gwang!

A terrifying power exploded forth.

Kairen was taken aback.

“Is it the Dragon's Roar?!”

No. The presence of the Dragon was far away, and there was no sign of a Roar. However, the shockwave that was riding across the land was oppressive. It reminded one of a Dragon's Roar. Kairen was 300 meters away, but the ground he was standing on was upended. An incredible amount of force rammed into his shield.

Hoo-ooh-ooh-ooh!

A big cloud of dust rose into the air as a violent gusts of wind blew. A being letting out an incredible amount of magical energy exited from within.

<You guys are quite good. I'm not sure what method you are using, but you've suppressed my power to this degree. I'm flabbergasted. I was only able to use half of my power.>

It was a voice of an Undead. When he heard its words, Kairen was dumbfounded.

‘What nonsense is it spouting? This is only half of its power?’

A conical shaped shock wave formed starting from where the power had originated. It upended an entire forest. It wasn't just an high intensity earthquake.

When the violent gust of wind revealed the figure within the cloud of dust, Kairen thought maybe it had been telling the truth.

“Is that perhap Reygus?”

The Dragon Demon Undead was enormous. It almost reached 3 meter in height, and it held a massive white battle hammer that was 2 meters long. The amount of ominous magical energy emitted from it clearly put it above Kairen’s level. From its appearance, the Undead was clearly the legendary Dragon Demon general Reygus.

Reygus’ gaze headed towards Kairen.

<New customers have arrived. Were you all sent out to stall us? I don’t see the red-haired human amongst you.>

Reygus tilted his head in puzzlement. The Guardian Shadows nearby started to whisper noisily. They were blown away by the strike applied by the head of the hammer, but almost none of them were extinguished.

<As expected, the Guardian Shadows are quite sturdy. Moreover, they have the ability to suppress my power.... I really am curious about what you guys are. If the little brat Carlos made you guys, he really created something marvelous.>

Reygus looked unsatisfied as it grumbled. It turned to look to the side, and one could see Balseru covered in dust.

Kairen was surprised when he spotted Balseru. Until now, Balseru had kept his eyes shut. They were open now. His eyes were dark blue, and they were emitting a strange energy. The energy wasn’t directly affecting Kairen, but a shiver went up his spine.

‘What is that?’

Flame erupted from the air, and it swept over Reygus.

Reygus received the attack with the head of his hammer as he spoke.

<That was lukewarm.>

<Then I’ll prepare something hot for you.>

Another Undead answered Reygus. Kairen saw a Fire type

Undead magician wearing floating above Balseru. It wore a flowing black robe. For a moment, Kairen thought it was Theta, who had accompanied Leone. Soon, it was obvious that it was some other being. Moreover....

Ggwah-gwahng!

Someone had rushed forward like a gale, and an enormous double edged axe fell towards Reygus. The black double edged axe was infused with powerful magic, and it was so heavy that a normal person wouldn't be able to raise it. The enormous warrior wearing armor swung it at high speed.

However, Reygus easily blocked the attack. After the weapons impacted on each other, the shockwave actually caused the attacker to be flung away.

<Koohk!>

<Quit it. It seems you've made yourself a name as someone that's pretty strong. It doesn't matter if it is the past or the present. No one can boast their strength in front of me.>

Regyus derided his opponent.

The one wielding the double edged axe was also an Undead. By the look of the magic infused weapon and armor it possessed, it was an Undead that accompanied the Keepers of Prophecy. It was almost 2 meters tall, and it possessed an enormous body frame. However, it looked like a dwarf in front of Reygus.

The Undead wielding the double edged axe spoke.

<Alpha! What happened? Why is this bastard unaffected?>

"I'm sure it is being influenced by my eyes. However, I cannot completely suppress it."

<...your eyes are suppressing its power, yet it is this strong? Impossible.>

"Unfortunately, it is so. Phi and Rho. Please join force with the

Dragon Sword Duk's party."

The Fire Magician Phi and the Double Edged Axe Undead Rho were sleepless guardians, who had taken on codenames.

As if their words were amusing, flame burned brighter from within the eye sockets of its Skull.

<Ho-oh. You are the Dragon Sword Duke? It is nice to meet you. I wanted to meet you once.>

"Since the legendary Dragon Demon general is saying such sentiments...."

At the same time, Kairen rushed forward. In the middle of his speech, he had used Instantaneous Movement in an attempt to take his opponent unawares. His Dragon sword struck out.

"It is an honor!"

At the same time his words ended, his left sword was blocked by the head of the battle hammer, and an explosive sound rang out. It was a powerful strike that could have blown away a house, yet it was blocked so easily.

However, Kairen wasn't flustered. In the first place, this strike had been a bait. He used exquisite timing to stab his right sword towards an opening.

<Hoo!>

In a flash, Reygus accelerated. It used its ability to react instantly to use a movement technique, and before Kairen's right sword could accelerate fully, Reygus deflected the blade to the side using the shoulder region of its armor. Then it immediately stomped with a tree-trunk like leg.

Ggwah-gwahng!

An explosion rang out, and the nearby surface was upended. From the top to the bottom, it had brought down its foot at an oblique angle. When it impacted the surface, a circular shockwave

exploded forth with Reygus at the center. Leticia had been aiming for a delayed attack. She was sent flying alongside Kairen.

When Kairen righted himself, he felt terrified. Reygus had broken through the dust cloud, and it was charging towards him. It used Instantaneous Movement to close the distance in a flash, and it brought down its hammer. It was a heroic looking attack, but the movement was large. That is why there were a lot of openings to the attack. Kairen coldly let out an attack in response.....

Ggwah-gwa-gwa-gwahng!

An explosive sound rang out, and he was flung backwards.

“Koo-uhk!”

The Dragon sword shook as if it was about to break, and he felt a shock hit his internal organs. When their attacks converged, he hadn't been able to fully offset the shock.

‘This bastard is strangely subtle with his moves!’

When he attacked an opening, Reygus' speed increased again by a beat, and it was able to turn away his attack. Then the path of the dynamic strike by the hammer started to change in subtle ways. It became an attack that couldn't be avoided. Kairen had no choice, but to meet the attack with an attack.

<Bone of Soul Seal! Run amok once again!>

A clear light once again extended into the sky. When the light returned, the battle hammer was burning white in a blinding fashion.

At that moment, Kairen knew this was the worst case scenario. By looking at the result of its previous attack, he would die if he put up a sloppy defense.

‘If so!’

Kairen gave up on defense, and he focused only on his attack. His

dual swords let out a white glow, and he chanted out a command infused with Dragon Demon magic.

“Oh Dragon swords. Burn away the evil fire!”

His sword strike held his deadly will. It split through the air as it let forth a terrifying light. It happened at the same time as Reygus brought down its hammer.

Ggwah-gwa-gwa-gwahng!

Everything that could be seen was burning white. The Dragon weapon had the power to split even a mountain, and it was comparable in power to a Dragon’s Roar. The enormous explosion flooded into the surrounding.

Chapter 135 – Gathering Legends (1)

1

Dragon Sword Duke Kairen was a living legend. He had lived much longer than the lifespan of a human, and he had achieved many accolades. This was why the people of the Rulain Kingdom looked up to him, and in truth, he was proud of that fact.

However, Kairen had also been a youth before, and there were figures in legends he had idolized.

They were the shining stars, who distinguished themselves in the largest war in human history.

The heroes and villains were all important figures that had their names immortalized. The countless legends from before that existed on the continent were overshadowed by those, who fought in the Dragon Demon war. People would only remember their names in the future.

Sometimes Kairen wondered what would have happened if he was born during those times. He had many accomplishments under his belt, but his name would never be immortalized like the heroes of that time. If he was born during that time, how effective would he have been against the big names, who sided with darkness?

In his life, he never thought he would be able to find out the answer to that question.

Kwah-gwah-gwah-gwah.....!

The deflagration covered a wide region. It was hard to believe that this was a fight between only two people. The overwhelming shockwave shook the ground. Everyone, who had been fighting for their lives, turned to look at the site of the explosion.

<Splendid! It has been awhile since I've met someone that makes me want to fight! Yes! When a man takes up the sword, one has to

have the resolve to charge forward even in front of certain death!>

Reygus was laughing uproariously.

It rang out like a thunderclap. Afterwards, a flash of light exploded forth. Kairen, who had taken on Reygus' attack using all his strength, was immediately attacked again.

Kairen had made the right decision. If he hadn't used an all out attack to fend off Reygus' attack, he would be dead.

Kairen's attack had offset the shockwave created by the head of the hammer, and the attack opened up a path towards Reygus.

"Koohk!"

Kairen groaned.

He had never been inferior in terms of power before. However, he couldn't keep up with Reygus' strength. When one determined the strong point of an opponent, it was idiotic to insist on playing into the other's strength. He felt annoyed since his pride had been hurt. However, he was sensible. He fought Reygus with his speed and technique.

However, his defense was surprisingly strong. Its large body frame and the length of its weapon created a big disparity in terms of reach. Moreover, Reygus' attack was terrifyingly powerful. Kairen was having a hard time getting in a hit.

Leticia had been watching the battle, and she voiced her frustration.

"Muscle brained idiots...."

She surrounded herself with ice walls, and she had endured the shock wave created by the attack. The explosion had created a blast center. It was as if a meteor had impacted on the ground to create a crater. The aftershock had spread to a radius of 500 meters. The nearby forests were overturned as if a volcano had gone off nearby.

"Let's join forces!"

<Oh my! Girls these days seems to not understand the optics of a battle. Wouldn't it be better if you looked on with warm eyes as the men fight a one on one battle?>

“When was that ever in fashion? If you want modest women to dance in front of you, you should have stayed in your grave!”

Leticia snorted as she surrounded her spear with frigid winds, and she stabbed with it. Reygus chuckled as it received Kairen and Leticia's almost simultaneous attacks.

<Both of you are splendid!>

Cold sweat was running down Leticia's body. She had thought Kairen was fairing well against Reygus, so she thought a joint attack would be able to take it down. The two of them attacked Reygus from the front and back, but Reygus wasn't being pushed backward easily.

‘How can a monster such as this exist?’

It's body was large, and it was swinging a medium sized weapon in heroic fashion. It looked as if it had many openings. However, once she fought it, she knew she had been wrong. Reygus' fighting style was typical of someone who used a mid sized weapon in conjunction with heavy armor. However, everything else about it was on a ridiculous level.

<Ho-ooh!>

Reygus let out a breath as if it was a living being, and it swung its hammer. At a glance, the attack was full of openings. However, the problem was its reach, and the force of the attack. Reygus swung it at a slight angle as he brought his hammer up from below to the top. At a glance, the attack looked like it was full of openings. However, the problem was the range and force of the blow. Reygus' big attack was like a runaway train where the force of the attack was too strong to deflect it. One would be sent flying on contact.

Pah-pah-pah-pah!

Then there was an explosive current that followed the attack's trajectory. It was explosive. The strong wind made it hard for Kairen and Leticia to breathe.

'If we try to win this by force, we'll be killed instead.'

Kairen and Leticia came to the same conclusion. Reygus' overall movement was slow, but it was able to accelerate and boost its power to an overwhelming degree at any given moment. Each strike looked like a light attack, but there was great power behind each blow. Moreover, it was an Undead, so it didn't have to catch its breath. It could continue attacking without breathing, so in a high speed battle, it was at an advantage.

Che-eek! Kee-keeng!

Harsh sounds were emitted as sparks flew off of Reygus' armor. Kairen's sword has slid off of it.

No matter how skilled Reygus was, it couldn't block all the high speed attack that was coming at it from both sides. It pushed the two out into the perimeter using its power, but attacks got through intermittently.

<Ooh-mmm!>

If it wasn't for the heavy armor infused with powerful magic, they could have ended this long ago. Kairen and Leticia's attack was that excellent.

'It really feels like I'm fighting against a castle.'

Kairen was letting out cold sweat. In the first place, Reygus was the type of fighter to fight while taking on blows like a berserker. The magical energy surrounding its body was so strong that it was hard to pierce through its defense.

Leticia was also in a bind.

'My cold winds aren't working at all.'

Normally, cold based attacks weren't that effective against the Undead. If it was a living being, the extreme cold would slow down the bodily functions, and her enemies would have to worry about frost bites. The Undead could be physically frozen, but it took no other damage.

However, Reygus was showing a stronger resistance than normal to the cold than the other Undead. The cold energy should have turned a normal person into an ice pillar. It was cold enough for frosts to form on the surface of one's skin.

Suddenly, Kairen grinded his teeth.

'Koohk! If I was alone, I wouldn't have been able to handle it. Shit!'

He was called the Dragon Sword Duke, and he had always held the upper hand in terms of power. Now he was on the wrong side of the power balance, so it was the first time he had wanted his allies to come to his aid.

His pride hurt that he couldn't face Reygus alone. He was facing an opponent that was too much for him. This was the first time he judged he couldn't beat an opponent since he faced Azell.

'What the hell are the Guardian Shadows doing?'

When he gained some distance, he surveyed his surrounding. What was the two Undead, who had been fighting with Balseru, doing right now? They clearly had the advantage, so if the others helped out, Kairen thought he could end this battle....

Soon, Kairen discovered the reason why.

'Shit. They are numerous, and they are elite troops.'

His attention had been focused on Reygus, so he hadn't realized that there were a great number of Dragon Demon king worshippers present. Kairen and Leticia was in charge of confronting Reygus, who was like a sweeping force. The rest was being taken care of by the Guardian Shadows, Yuren and Laura.

There were several Dragon Demons and Dragon Majins officers present. The rest were elite troops, so everyone was busy fighting.

<This is fun. I heard our side did some funny business in erasing the old techniques from the world. However, you guys are quite good.>

Reygus was being pushed back in a hurry, yet it seemed it was enjoying itself. Was its personality like that in life? Or did it lose the ability to fear death when it became an Undead?

At its words, Kairen's face crumpled. It was humiliating, but he would have lost outright if it wasn't for the techniques taught to him by Azell.

In his past battles with Dragon Demon king worshippers, he had been able to win without using such secret techniques. His wealth of Dragon Demon magic and Dragon swords were enough. He hadn't even possessed any high level skills. He kept working on his foundation to build himself up.

However, Reygus was an enemy that couldn't be overcome with just that. Dragon Arts of very high difficulty was being used by Reygus. It was influencing the surrounding and Kairen's magical energy. His mind was being attacked, and his senses were askew on top of physical damage. Reygus looked as if it was fighting in a simple style, but it was using these high level skills as if it was nothing.

Ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh.....!

Kairen, who had been glaring at Reygus, shuddered. He sensed an overwhelming amount of Dragon Demon magic from afar. It stimulated his senses so much that he took his eyes off of an opponent he should have his eyes glued to. He looked towards the source where the wave of power emanated from.

'Oh yeah!'

Terror struck Kairen's heart, and he got into a defensive stance.

However, Reygus didn't attack. Instead, he laughed as if he enjoyed all of this.

<Ho-oh. I didn't like that brat, because he was so gloomy. However, I have to acknowledge his skill. He was able to kill a Dragon.>

“Did the the Dragon Slayer's Ritual end?”

He mumbled to himself as if he was groaning. The feeling he felt was familiar. He felt it when Laura was trying to kidnap Seigar. It was the same feeling he felt when Azell won against the Thunder Dragon using the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

Reygus spoke.

<Yes. From what I've heard, kids these days only have a 20 percent chance of succeeding in the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. He managed to succeed.>

“Mmmm.....”

<Shall we continue to play? It seems my guys are starting to lose, so I'll have to end this soon.>

It was as it had said. The Dragon Demon king worshippers were at a disadvantage. While Kairen and Leticia occupied Reygus, Yuren, Laura and the Guardian Shadows had teamed up to cut down on the number of Dragon Demon King worshippers that were present.

Leticia made a sarcastic remark.

“You've been busy dodging attack, so you aren't in a position to say those words.”

It hurt Kairen and Leticia's pride to join forces, but they held the upper hand in the fight. Reygus had been hit several times, so a part of its armor was damaged.

However, Reygus was still full of confidence.

<That's... Unfortunately, that won't be true anymore.>

“What?”

Leticia became confused at that moment.

Chapter 136 – Gathering Legends (2)

Kwahng!

The sound of an explosion rang out as she was flung away. Reygus' speed couldn't be compared to before. It struck out at her, and it immediately followed up with an additional attack.

Kah-ahng!

Leticia was almost beaten all too soon, but the one to save her was Kairen. He was startled into action. His left sword turned the path of the hammer, and his right sword aimed for its head.

However, Reygus' reaction was totally unexpected. Instead of avoiding the Dragon sword, it received the attack with its head. Reygus moved so fast that it felt as if time had been sped up in that brief moment.

Then....

Ggwah-gwahng!

The head of the hammer fell like thunder as the shockwave detonated. Normally, the position of its body wouldn't allow a powerful blow to be used, yet its attack was devastating.

It was an Undead. A living being was limited by the range of motion of one's joints, but that didn't matter to an Undead. The joints of its shoulders and elbows were moving at unnatural angles, yet it didn't kill the power behind the blow.

Kairen and Leticia was sent flying in a bloody mess.

“Koo-ahk.....!”

The left side of Kairen's armor was ripped away. It hadn't even been a direct hit. He was grazed by the attack, yet his magically enhanced armor was demolished!

Leticia was also in a rough shape. Her left arm was broken as her gauntlet was ripped away.

Kairen breathed raggedly as he asked it a question.

“Until now.... Were you playing with us.....?”

There was anger behind his voice. Did Reygus act like it was losing on purpose? Had it been treating them with kid gloves? It was so humiliating that it was almost unbearable.

While they had been fighting, Reygus had shown momentarily boost of speed. However, the speed he had just displayed was in a totally different dimension. No, it wasn't just its acceleration. Its overall movement had increased in speed by a factor of two. It was almost inevitable that Leticia had been caught flat footed.

Those weren't they only changes. Its overall magical energy emanating from Reygus' body swelled to an oppressive amount. It almost rivaled a Dragon.

Reygus spoke.

<I hope you don't misconstrue my words. I enjoyed fighting you guys, but I didn't go easy on you.>

“Ha ha ha ha. How can you say....”

<I'm speaking the truth. Until a moment ago, my power had been suppressed. That Guardian Shadow had some kind of strange ability related to his eyes.>

“.....”

Balseru always had his eyes closed. There was a strange power residing within his eyes. After Reygus had woken up, it had never seen anyone capable of interfering with the power of an Undead. However, Balseru was able to halve its power by looking at Reygus.

‘It is quite strange. Their Undeads are similar to me.... Did that brat Carlos steal the king's secret technique, or.....’

However, it seemed there was a limit to his power. When the Dragon Demon king worshippers pushed back, the suppressive force dissipated. This was the result . The body of an Undead was

rotted away, so everything was influenced by magical energy. When the suppression of its magical energy was gone, Reygus' strength and speed was rapidly increased.

Leticia caught her breath as she spoke.

“If that was true... Now that I know how fast you are we won't fall so easily. Moreover, we have support.”

<Ah ah. Do you mean that miss over there?>

Laura appeared from behind Leticia. Kairen used Whispering to ask for help, and Laura was able to come to their aid by letting Yuren handle everything by himself.

When Reygus saw her, it spoke.

<I can tell at a glance. You look very similar to my friend, who couldn't return from the world of the dead. You are the one that betrayed us, Ms. Laura.>

“That is correct.”

Laura spoke in respectful words. She did betray them, but Reygus was one of the eldest even amongst the elders. Everyone revered him.

Of course, she didn't let that fact affect her actions. A frightening wave of Dragon Demon magic spread into the surrounding, and a curse swept over Reygus.

<It is true that even I would have some difficulties if a magician of her caliber joined in, but....>

Kairen and Leticia had been taken unawares by the sudden change in Reygus. However, they were formidable fighters. If Laura joined in to support them, Reygus would have considerable trouble dealing with them.

<Your opponent is someone else.>

“I don't see anyone, who is in the position to fight me.”

Laura had come here, because her side had a handle on the Dragon Demon king worshippers. Yuren was capable of taking care of the rest. Moreover, the Guardian Shadows had joined the fray, and it was turning into a free for all. The Dragon Demon king worshippers didn't have the numeric advantage.

However, at that moment, a beam of light came flying towards her from afar.

Puh-uh-uhng!

When the magic spell was activated, Laura saw the signs immediately. She was easily able to defend against it. Moreover, she was able to change the direction of the spell to hit Reygus with it.

“Traitor Laura.”

When she heard the bleak voice, she couldn't help but flinch. Laura raised her head in disbelief.

She saw a Dragon Majin youth. He was surrounded by six swords that had been infused with powerful curses. The Dragon Majin youth's hair had already turned white, and he had a pale complexion with blue eyes. There was a black feather-like horn protruding from atop his pointy left ear.

Laura's amethyst eyes shook.

“Dikal?”

2

The Dragon Majin youth was full of madness. He snickered as he looked at Laura.

“You remembered my name. It is an honor. However, you are wrong. You should call me by a different name.”

“What do you mean?”

“Dikal Aunsaurus. That is now my name.”

At the same time, Dikal activated his Dragon Demon magic. Six swords, which were letting out powerful Curse magic, rose into the air. They flew towards Laura.

Laura blocked the swords as she flew into the air. Dikal chased after her as he poured out continuous magic spells.

Pah-cheet! Pah-jee-jeek! Pah-baht!

High ranked magicians were fighting in the air with magic. It caused sparks and ripple like waves. They were performing magic spells at high speed, but they were severing the flow of energy before the magic spell could take shape. It was a quiet, yet fierce battle.

Dikal asked her a question.

“Why aren’t you using your Dragon weapon?”

“That... I do not have it anymore.”

“Ha! So it was true that the man, who possesses the name steeped in sin, asked for the Vitan’s Chalice in exchange for accepting your betrayal?”

“Yes.”

“You admit to it too easily! Foolish bitch!”

Dikal suddenly stopped speaking, and he cackled.

“Ah. I shouldn’t be mad about it. Of course, I also had to struggle through hell to gain that.... Thanks to your betrayal I was able to take off that damnable mask. I’m able to live with my face out in the open, so you are my benefactor, Laura.”

“.....”

Dikal Aunsaurus.

He hadn’t possessed a name until not too long ago. No, to be precise, his name had been taken away from him. On the day Laura received her name, he received the name of Dikal. When he was

branded as a failure, his name was stolen again. He was restrained using black magic, and he had become a mere tool to be used in battle.

He had thought he would expire after being used in such a way forever. However, he had regained his name when Laura betrayed them. The leaders of the Aunsaurus was taken aback by the news, so they gave back Dikal his name. He was named the new heir. Then he was given orders to kill Laura.

Dikal spoke.

“Since you’ve already bestowed me a favor, you should go all the way by dying here. I’ll be very thankful. This will solidify my position..... I would have liked it if I could have taken back the Vitan’s Chalice, but I guess I’ll have to kill the man, who possesses it.”

He sent a fierce attack towards her. He had just finished the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, so his condition was optimal. He was overflowing with firepower, and his Dragon Demon magic came up as if it was flowing forth from a spring with an endless source.

Ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh!

His six swords weren’t Dragon weapons, but they were powerful magical weapons created by Aunsaurus during the Dragon Demon War. It flew around at high speed, and there were six different yet powerful curses infused within them. The weapons possessed a sense of self that worked in concert with the user.

In terms of magical attacks, they were almost equal. The difference were the tools they possessed. Laura was slowly losing ground.

Pah-ah-ahng!

“.....!”

Laura was flung away by an explosion. Her face crumpled from the pain. When she blocked the cursed swords, a magic spell

arrived from another direction. It pierced through her barrier, and it had delivered a shock.

Dikal mocked Laura.

“As expected, you are amazing. You are able to hold up to this extent without the Dragon weapon? However, we don’t have to all join the fight.... I’ll kill you on my own!”

“...we? Did you bring the Shadow’s Sword Belt?”

At his words, Laura asked the question as if she was groaning.

The Shadow Sword Belt was a unit formed of beings, who failed to become the Aunsaurus’ heir. The Aunsaurus family didn’t use this force unless it was something very important. Dikal had been a member of the Shadow’s Sword Belt not too long ago. Each member was stripped of their names, and their faces were covered with a cursed mask. His pale face was caused by it.

Dikal gave her an answer.

“Yes. Do you know how much importance they are putting on killing you? Moreover, do you realize how little trust they put in me?”

He spoke mockingly about himself. Dikal was given the magic weapons of Aunsaurus, and the Shadow’s Sword Belt was sent along with him. It meant they had no confidence that he would be able to win against Laura by himself. They believed so even though she no longer possessed her Dragon weapon.

“However, they will find out through this event! They’ll realize they were wrong in their judgement! They will realize their selection process was flawed from the beginning!”

After driving Laura’s back against the wall, Dikal’s voice was now filled with ecstasy. Everyone had fought desperately for the title of heir. However, the standard they were measured up against was strict, and even a minor mistake would disqualify one from the competition. There were picking one child from a crop of talented

kids that numbered over 100. Some weren't even given identities before they were used as tools. It exemplified how crazy of a process it was.

Of course, the ones that failed were discontent with the process. A very minor mistake had robbed them of all opportunities in life, and they were thrown into the pits of hell. How could they not be bitter?

Dikal was Laura's last competition, so he felt especially aggrieved. The Aunsaurus family had been wrong. He was given another opportunity to show them he was the most suitable candidate to become the heir....

Suddenly, Laura spoke.

"...so that was what you were thinking."

"You speak as if you've never thought the same thing. Isn't it the same for you?"

"It was different for me."

Laura shook her head from side to side. She spoke as she looked straight at Dikal.

"I didn't have the luxury to think such thoughts unlike you, Dikal."

"What?"

"I never thought about the future. I didn't care about what I was trying to accomplish was worth. What you guys were thinking about.... I never thoughta bout it."

Until Laura became the heir, she never thought she was exceptional. The number of disqualified candidates mounted as her siblings disappeared. At some point in time, everything lost meaning to her as the color faded from the world.

It was ridiculous, but until she became Aunsaurus heir, she had been going through the motion. She let the inertia of her

circumstances carry her until she had met Azell.

There was a time when she had been happy to receive a name. Then she worked desperately to measure up to the standard of the ones that were giving the test. The events she had created a momentum, and she was merely pushed forward by it. The desire to go forward had been extinguished a long time ago.

At the time, even her will to live had been starting to fade. When she went into a test, she knew there was a chance that she would no longer exist at the end. This was why she had let go of determining her own fate. She stood up with an empty heart.

However, she had survived. Maybe, her indifference had helped her inadvertently. Her competitors had been desperate, and their hearts were shaken by hope and despair. Her heart had never shook as she

Suddenly, Laura spoke.

“I’m sorry.”

Chapter 137 – Gathering Legends (3)

Suddenly, Laura spoke.

“I’m sorry.”

“Did you go mad, because your death is drawing nigh? What the hell are you talking about?”

“When I think about the past, I didn’t try to win against all of you guys. I didn’t care if I won or not. If I failed, I wouldn’t have thought much on it. I didn’t have anything worth caring about.”

There was a faraway look in Laura’s eyes. Dikal was confused. He couldn’t tell what Laura was thinking.

“A person who didn’t have the desire to live survived as the others, who desperately wanted to live, were eliminated. I know how insulting this sounds. I didn’t realize this until not too long ago.”

Maybe, the life lived by Laura in the past couldn’t be considered as her living her life. She hadn’t possessed any enthusiasm or desire for anything. She had merely been a puppet that did whatever her creators wanted her to do.

Her life started from the moment she started to follow Azell.

She had thought her inner self had been killed, yet her flame had been rekindled. For the first time in her life, she had made her own decision on how she wanted to live. Color returned to her gray world, and she was able to feel new emotions each day.

“That is why.... I have to win now. I don’t want to win, because I have to win. I want to win, because I want to win. I want to live, so I’ll survive.”

“What nonsense. Do you think tragedy won’t befall you, because your perspective on life has changed? I’ve always had a hard time discerning what you were thinking about, but it seems you aren’t

of sound mind. You should die in the grips of your madness. You should become my stepping stone.”

Dikal surrounded Laura with his cursed swords, and he let out a cruel laugh. If it wasn't for her, his name wouldn't have been stolen. A cursed mask wouldn't have been placed on him, and he wouldn't have fallen to become part of the disposable troops. He had recovered his original position, so it was time to get the compensation he deserved for the pain he had endured up until now.

“Let me be clear about this one thing. You are too arrogant, Dikal.”

“What?”

Dikal became angry at Laura's declaration.

Puh-uhng!

Laura's magic penetrated his defense, and it ignited.

“Koo-uhk!”

Dikal's defense was strong. Moreover, he had gained experience through battle over the years, so she shouldn't have been able to get the better of him so easily.

However, Laura circumvented all of his defense, and she sent a shockwave towards him. Dikal was a bloody mess as he fell towards the ground. He was barely able to regain altitude. Laura turned the table as if the previous fight had been a lie. She let out magic spells in a torrent.

Pah-pah-pah-pahng!

The cursed swords were hit with magic almost simultaneously. They were flung away. After he took control of his scattered Dragon Demon magic, he saw something very intricate had gotten better of him. It gave him goosebumps.

Dikal was taken aback.

“This... How did you get through my defense.....!”

“You’ve been stuck in one place for far too long.”

Laura looked at Dikal with sad eyes.

Dikal most definitely possessed a wealth of magic. He had borrowed the power of the magic weapons, and he had finished the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual. His strength wasn’t in doubt.

Even if they were all born inside an artificial womb, they weren’t all Dragon Majins. Even if the Dragon Majins were considered to be the most outstanding candidates, the Aunsaurus family performed a variety of experiments with Dragon Demons and Dragon Majins. They were all made to be candidates for the position of heir.

Dikal had been peerless amongst the Dragon Majins, and in some aspects, he exceeded the Dragon Demons. He was talented enough to compete with Laura until the end.

However, this happened a long time ago.

“I don’t have my Dragon weapon, but.....”

Laura started canceling Dikal’s defensive magic one by one. Dikal desperately tried to match her feat, but he was no match for her. Everything he had built up was being brought down like a sand castle being toppled over.

“You came here too soon.”

Finally, Laura was able to break through the silent exchange of magic. Her magic started to manifest one or two at a time. She had taken control of the situation. Lightning exploded, and heat started to boil up to threaten the life of her enemy. On the other side, Dikal’s magic was still being sealed before it could manifest.

At a glance, one could tell that there weren’t much difference between the two in terms of how much Dragon Demon magic they possessed. It was true that Laura possessed a little bit more, but Dikal had just finished the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual. Moreover, he

had Aunsaurus' swords. He had unusually high amount of power right now.

However, in terms of skill as a magician, Laura was overwhelmingly superior. It wasn't just her use of magic. The types of spells she had learned was also at a much higher level.

It couldn't be helped. Even if one possessed a genius level talent, one had to still study magic. It took time to go through the process of researching and training one's magic.

After Laura became the heir, she continued to improve herself as she took full advantage of all the opportunities she was afforded.

If one compared Dikal to her, his access to knowledge was severed when he became disqualified. He had to fight with what he had learned up until that point in time. He was basically a tool with a fixed setting.

He had assumed he would be able to close the gap by using a good magic weapon. However, he had underestimated Laura too much. Laura had been pushed back until now, because her heart was in turmoil. It wasn't because she was lacking in skill.

Laura had a resolute expression on her face as she made a declaration towards Dikal.

"I still have a lot I want to see. After waking up everyday, I yearn for more. That is why I will live. I will not live as the puppet they've created. I want to see what is at the end of the road that was chosen by me."

"Laurahhhhhhhhhk.....!"

Dikal let out a scream. Her surrounding was completely under her control now. The six cursed swords, which was imprinted with blood, was being interfered with Laura's magic. Their movement was a mess.

"I want to say this is the end, but....."

Laura mumbled to herself. At that moment, lightning came at her from all sides.

Gwah-gwah-gwahng! Ggwah-gwahng!

However, Laura was able to escape the storm of lightning without taking any damage. Her gaze left Dikal. She looked towards the ground.

She could feel the numerous resonance of powerful Dragon Demon magic. There were over 30 of them. In terms of the quantity of Dragon Demon magic they possessed, they rivalled the officers on field. They were emitting their killing intent towards Laura.

They were the Shadow's Sword Belt, who had come here with Dikal. Dikal ordered them to be on standby, so he could face Laura alone. However, it was a situation where they had to interfere.

Suddenly, something Azell said came to mind in Laura's thoughts.

'Unfortunately, this isn't a problem with a ready made remedy that'll make you feel better. There are many problems in this world, and there are some like this one where you can't do much about it.'

Her siblings had been born from the artificial wombs to be tools. At some point, they became worthless to her. She hadn't been wounded, and she hadn't felt any pain when they disappeared after their disqualification.

However, at this moment.... Her chest hurt when their killing intent was aimed at her.

"...I understand. I have no choice but to end this."

Laura put on a sad smile as she renewed her resolve.

3

When Dikal started his fight with Laura, Kairen and Leticia was

once again placed in deep trouble. They focused only on defense, yet they became bloody messes in short order.

“Koo-uhk!”

Kairen was kicked by Reygus. He was sent flying to the ground. He was barely able break his fall, but he faltered to his knees.

“Huhk, huhk, huh-uhk.....”

The battlefield was filled with the sound of battle, yet he was feeling drowsy. He was injured, and his stamina was running out. It was evidence that his concentration was faltering. The fight with Reygus hadn't been long, but it was too brutal for his body and mind.

It was the same for Leticia. She looked as she was out of strength too.

<Ah ah. This really makes me think about the past.>

Reygus spoke in front of them. The two of them had shown their floor now. If it wanted to, it could end them at any moment. However, it wasn't taking its time, because it was arrogant. It was for a sentimental reasons.

Humans and other races acted foolishly in battle. While they were killing each other, they sought to look cool. They sought out romanticism. Reygus wasn't an exception either. He had come back from death, so he savored the sensation of fighting against outstanding foes. The fact that the fight had ended made him feel very wistful.

“Koohk.....”

Kairen grinded his teeth.

He had taken too much damage when he was taken unawares in the beginning. If it wasn't for that, he would have lasted a little bit longer.....

Leticia spoke with a venomous voice.

“You are acting like an old man. You’ve already died once, yet you aren’t pressed for time. Didn’t you learn in your past life that being so confident will actually shorten your lifespan?”

<Are you trying to insult me in an attempt to kill you faster?>

Reygus tilted its head in puzzlement. Leticia snickered.

“I guess I can’t help it If it sounds like that to you. It has been awhile since I’ve experienced being the weaker one in a fight.... As expected, it isn’t a good feeling. I’ve always known your organization was powerful as a whole, but I’ve never faced an individual that was this strong. It is something I haven’t experienced in a long time.”

Reygus was puzzled as he looked at her. Was she giving herself up to despair, because her back was up against the wall? However, the attitude she displayed while sweeping back her bangs indicated that this wasn’t the case.

“However, it is a bit early to bask in your victory, legendary Dragon Demon general.”

<Do you have some hidden technique you’ve held back? If so, you should hurry up and show it to me. I’m crazy in the fact that I like seeking out danger.>

“You are an idiot.”

<My comrades often expressed such sentiments to me. However, wouldn’t it be a waste not to see everything a strong foe has to offer? This is what makes my life worthwhile.>

“Comrades... Yes, that is what I’m putting my trust in. It is a bit awkward, since I don’t have much experience in doing so.....”

<Mmm?>

It happened when Reygus was trying to make sense of her words. The ground beneath it disappeared.

<What the hell?>

The ground beneath its feet was acting weird. The ground cratered inward. Reygus' body was being sucked below.

Sometimes, magicians softened the ground in front of a charging enemy in order to trap them, but this was different from such low-grade technique. Reygus didn't feel anything before the ground beneath its feet disappeared.

When Reygus understood what was happening, a white bolt of lightning rose up from the ground.

Gwah-roo-roong! Gwah-gwahng!

<Shit! This is Aunsaurus' trick!>

Reygus was able to defend against it by a hair's breadth as it jumped into the air. The thunderbolt followed after him. Reygus aimed the head of the hammer towards an opening in the attack. The thunderbolt exploded.

Kwahhhhhh.....!

From behind it, a young man with swirling red hair made his appearance. It was Azell.

<Ho-oh!>

Reygus was sent flying from the ambush attack, but its voice was filled with extreme happiness. The red haired young man was holding a sword that was rippling with a blue sheen. Thunder erupted from his entire body. He looked exactly like someone Reygus knew.

<It is as I suspected. It really is you!>

It couldn't hold back its laughter. It shouted as it laughed out loud.

<Azell! You really are alive!>

Then a weird silence descended on the battlefield.

Chapter 138 – Second Coming of a Legend (1)

1

Silence quickly spread in a battlefield that had been filled with screams and loud sounds. At that moment, everyone turned to look at Reygus as if they had misheard its words.

“...did he just say Azell? It really is Azell himself?”

The Dragon Demon king worshippers looked towards Reygus in disbelief.

Azell was the great sinner, who had killed their exalted king. The human, Azell Karzark, was like the ultimate evil that appeared in their lore.

He had killed the king, but he had paid a price. It was widely known that he had fallen into hell when an eternal curse was placed on him.

It wasn't just the Dragon Demon king worshippers, who were shocked. The Guardian Shadows were frozen from the shock they felt.

Reygus didn't care if they were looking at it or not. Its gaze remained fixed on Azell. Since it was an Undead with only a skeleton as its body, it was impossible for Reygus to make a facial expression. However, Azell felt that it was laughing like a mischievous tyke. It was the same in the past. Reygus didn't hold a single iota of hate towards a strong opponent. Instead, it took pleasure in the encounter like a immature brat.

When he thought about those time, a sigh automatically came out.

Azell spoke as if he was dismayed.

“What are you talking about, you big lummoX of an Undead? The hero Azell died 220 years ago.”

<That's what I thought too. However, that little brat that is standing in front of me alive and kicking?>

“Humans usually produce descendants that look surprisingly like their ancestors. Since you've lost your brain when you came back from death, did you forget about such common sense?”

<Oh. That is the least entertaining joke I've heard since I've been revived. The brat I knew was a bit more imposing. Well, I guess 220 years enough time for you to become a coward?>

“Ah. You are pissing me off. Shall I tell you something really ridiculous?”

<What is it?>

“Wild pig Reygus. It is very nice to see you. Does that make any sense?”

<Koo-hahahaha!>

Reygus laughed uproariously at his words. Its thunder-like laugh rang out in the battlefield.

After it stopped laughing, Reygus spoke.

<If it was just the Heaven Splitter(Sword that Splits the Sky) , I would have just assumed you were a descendent. However, you spoke too openly about yourself in the fight with Ms Niberis. So why are you trying to make excuses now?>

“I'll make a confession. I've told everyone the truth, yet no one believed me. That is why I'm a bit hesitant to make that claim.”

<That is unfortunate. Anyways, I feel the same way as you. It sounded nice even when you called me a wild pig. I feel like shedding a tear. Of course, I can't shed any tears any more.>

“That is quite fortunate. You've become much more handsome in the time I wasn't able to see you. In the past, your face was so ugly that it made me want to throw up.”

<Hue hue. Your rude way of speaking is the same as 220 years

ago.>

At that moment, Kairen's voice could be heard from behind.

"...the story you told me was real?"

Kairen's voice was trembling. When Azell told the truth in the beginning, Kairen had cut him off thinking it was a fabricated story. However, as he spent more time with Azell on the travel, he wondered if the story was true or not. He mused over the idea even as he mocked himself for it.

Azell spoke.

"That topic might lead to an animated conversation, and we aren't in a position to do so."

"...ha ha ha. Let's push it off to a later time. You better be prepared."

"You were the one that didn't believe me when I told you the truth. You shouldn't be saying that."

Azell snorted as he looked back at Reygus. Kairen and Leticia knew very well what they should be doing with the time bought by Azell.

Of course, Reyugus knew it too. However, it didn't attack immediately. The deep emotions it felt after meeting Azell again was too large.

<It seems you've suffered under a similar predicament as I.>

"It is so for those that live a life that others have a hard time accepting as reality. It is something that can't be experienced except by the first generation Dragon Demons, who's far removed from reality."

<That is true. So what are you doing here?>

"Do you really think I'll tell you that?"

<No. I'm sure it is a plan to screw us over. However, I'm really

surprised. What method did that brat, Carlos, use to keep you alive until now? He's already done enough by killing my friends, yet he.....>

"I heard you asked about Carlos' whereabouts. Why did you ask such a question? Is it impossible to think logically now that you don't have a brain? Ah, of course, you barely thought logically even when you still had your brain."

<Ha ha ha. You are quite lame, Azell. You are alive and kicking, so why should I believe he is dead? You hid yourself like a mouse, while moving around.....>

"Ah. Let me correct you on that. I didn't hide my identity. Didn't you say so yourself? I hinted at my identity a lot when I fought Niberis. If I planned on hiding my identity, why would I do that? Your guys must be poorly educated. They didn't recognize me at all."

<By the look of it, your comrades didn't recognize you either.>

"Sadly, you are right. It is a tough world where people won't believe you when you tell the truth."

Azell burst out laughing.

Azell's true identity was too incongruous with reality. It was a truth that couldn't be confirmed unless someone from Azell's era could corroborate it.

Azell always knew this day was coming. There were survivors of the Dragon Demon war inside the Plain of Darkness. There would come a day when they would take matters into their own hands.

However..... He never expected Reygus to show up as an Undead.

"Even if you are an Undead, aren't you too high up in the food chain to come here yourself? You left the kids behind to come out yourself. It seems you aren't being treated well there."

<No way. Everyone treats me like an old man, who should stay

cooped up in the backroom.... Well, you know my personality. It won't change just because I'm dead.>

“It doesn't look like that from my point of view. If not, they would have sent couple more of the higher ranked....”

<Even Dragon Demons and Dragon Majins can't win against time. You are only a human, yet you remained the same over this long period of time. It seems you didn't feel it, but.... Ah. I shouldn't blather on like this. Jeez.>

“Ho-oh.”

Azell's eyes shone.

It was obvious if one thought about it. Two hundred twenty years had passed since the Dragon Demon war. The survivors from that time were all old and weakened now. It meant that there weren't that many that was young enough to fight in battles themselves.

Moreover, the structure of the organization was also a problem. During the Dragon Demon war, as one's power increased in the Dragon Demon army, one was given more missions. Those in high places couldn't back out from fights based on their position. They couldn't when Dragon Demon king Atein and the four Dragon Demon generals fought in the frontlines as an example.

On the other hand, the Plain of Darkness was a secret organization that hid from the eyes of the world. They schemed from behind the curtain. It was a society formed through fanaticism where the Demon King Atein was deified. There was a strict hierarchy within this organization. The humans were the lowest class, and even the Dragon Majins and Dragon Demons were stratified by bloodlines.

In such an organization, those with power gave orders. They didn't carry out their own objectives. Basically, they created a system where they cultivated and deployed fighters. They merely maintained and serviced the machinery they created. They didn't

directly enter into a fight..

If so, how could they have maintained their own personal battle prowess after 200 years of doing this?

‘I learned a very important information.’

From what he learned from Laura, the upper crust of the Plain of Darkness rarely moved. If those in high positions still had comparable power they possessed during the Dragon Demon war, they wouldn't be making their descendants do the work. They wouldn't pass on the weapons of the Dragon Demon generals to their descendants.

Reygus spoke.

<I can hear the gear inside your head turn. Shit. It seems I said something I shouldn't have.>

“Whether it's the past or now, you haven't changed. Well, I guess it is fortunate for you that Baldazark and Aunsaurus are no longer here. They would have gotten angry at you.”

During the Dragon Demon war, Reygus hadn't thought much. He was the type of being that acted on his emotions. When he found a powerful enemy, he ignored his allies and the battle plan. His eyes would twinkle as he charged into a battle they had almost won. He tried to bait his opponents into using their hidden card.....

‘He is the same as before. It seems this bastard's idiocy was baked into his bones.’

Reygus was a being that had lived over a thousand years, yet it was quite immature. In some ways, one could describe Reygus as a pure martial artist.

Reygus laughed at those word.

<Koo-koo-koohnk. You are a brat, yet you treat your elder as if he's a kid. Well, all right. How about....>

Reygus spoke cheerfully as it raised its hammer.

<Let us stop our friendly banter here.... Shall I check out your prowess?>

Reygus charged before Azell could get into his stance. Kairen was standing off to the side, and he was barely able to keep up with its speed with his eyes.

Kairen's eyes were belatedly seeing the afterimages.

He saw a surprising sight. Reygus had delivered a surprise attack, but Azell was already behind it. He was able to get in one blow.

<Koo-uhk!>

Azell's single strike did plenty of damage to Reygus. Reygus righted itself before it almost fell over, and it swung its hammer. Azell didn't dodge it. He deflected it head on.

...that's what Reygus thought he was attempting.

When the sword made contact with the hammer, there was a little bit of resistance before the sword turned into light. Azell aimed the Dragon Maken, which was rippling with thunder, towards Reygus from the back.

Gwah-gwahng!

Reygus' huge body rose into the air. The dispersing thunderbolt coalesced at a single point, and it turned into the blue Dragon Maken. He gripped the sword, then six of him appeared. In a flash, they attacked Reygus again with a slight delay on each attack.

<Kah-ahhkh!>

Reygus let out a scream.

He was barely able to repel the first attack, but another Azell appeared as if he had been waiting for this moment. Azell lifted Reygus into the air with his attack. Before its defense could harden again, Azell let out additional attacks. Where Reygus was flung away, another Azell was waiting for it.....

A combination of seven attacks sent Reygus rocketing into the

air. The last Azell brought down the Dragon Maken surrounded with thunder as if he had been waiting for this moment.

‘Thunder Dragon’s Horn!’

Lightning erupted.

In a flash, a lightning that looked as if it would rip apart the heavens exploded forth. The terrifying wave of Dragon Demon magic shook the earth, and after a heartbeat, an enormous cloud of dust rose into the air.

It all happened in a flash, so everyone thought Reygus had been killed. This was how terrifying Azell’s attack was, and it etched a deep impression on everyone.

<D...amn...it all....! Ooh-ahhhhhh!>

However, a shout of anger arose from inside the cloud of dust. The sound rang out as it dispersed the dusts.

Afterwards, Azell and Reygus clashed.

Pah-jee-jee-jee-jee!

The magical energy of thunder and the magical energy of pulverization clashed against each other as it started to raise the temperature of the air around them. Reygus gritted its teeth.

<You bastard! When did the Heaven Splitter develop such a ability?>

“How long ago was that? It seems your death has stopped your progress. No, you’ve actually become weaker. It is to be expected, since you’ve lost your Dragon Demon magic!”

Azell snorted.

Reygus had died before it was able to see the final battle that had occurred at the Dragon’s Horn Fortress. This was why it didn’t know about Azell’s peak abilities.

At that moment, magical energy was overflowing from his

Energy Pulse. It was swirling with terrifying force.

The vessel to hold his magical energy was still incomplete, but the amount of magical energy he could produce for a short amount of time was comparable to the level he displayed in his prime.

Ba-dump! Ba-dump! Ba-dump!

Magical energy erupted like hail when his heart pulsed.

Currently, there were seven Rings of Life around his heart. If one went by the normal standards, he was a Septuple master. Amongst all of them, six had gone through Dual Banding. The magical energy created through the resonance transcended common sense.

‘It is a suitable opponent to test out my new answer!’

In the past, Laura had said Atein would be revived to the form he possessed at the time of his death. Azell came to the conclusion that there was no way he would be able to win against Atein.

However, it didn’t matter if it was the past or present. He didn’t despair or give up. He thought hard on finding answers to his problem.

Dual Banding was one of the few ways he would be able to exceed his past self. It was still incomplete, but if he was able to complete his 7th Ring of Life, he would boast enough magical energy that would exceed the magical energy of his prime!

“Well, Reygus! You are a mere ghost from the past! You should become the sacrificial offering to the technique I developed!”

Chapter 139 – Second Coming of a Legend (2)

“Well, Reygus! You are a mere ghost from the past! You should become the sacrificial offering to the technique I developed!”

Light exploded forth as Azell let out a shout. Reygus was sent flying. Azell had been in a strength contest when his clone appeared from the side of Reygus. Azell’s clone had gotten a blow in. The armor, which had been as sturdy as a castle, started to break apart. The darkness started to flow out from within.

<Koo-oohk! Maybe I should have read the information gathered by our guys? I guess I’m in this situation since I don’t like to make preparations!>

“You always acted arrogant as if you knew everything there is to know in the world. This is why terrible things always happen to you. You are the same now as in old times! Didn’t I tell you before that an old man with an aggressive attitude is unsightly?”

Azell’s voice rang out from all sides. The branches of thunder extended to all sides. In between them, several dozen Azells appeared, and they all felt like the real one. They were intended to confuse the senses.

<Shit! Cry! My soul hammer.....!>

“Do you think I’ll let you use such a big skill!”

Before it could activate the power of its soul hammer, Azell’s clone followed along the erratic path taken by a branch of the thunder. He appeared in front of Reygus. It could happen only for an instant, but his clone could produce power comparable to his real body.

However, Reygus stopped its movement at a dime to block Azell’s attack. It had been bringing down its hammer to attack, but it stopped as if the attack had been a lie. It was an illogical move, and Azell was taken aback by it.

<Since I'm dead, I can do this now!>

This was a trick that can't be performed with a living body. If one tried to quickly hold back an attack with power behind it, one's bones, muscles, nerves and blood vessels would suffer enormous damage. It didn't matter how much magical energy one put into one's body to strengthen it. It would all be damaged.

However, as an Undead, it was possible to move in such illogical ways. It was like the time when it ignored the restriction imposed by the joint's range of motion. If it could endure the strengthening magic, it was possible to move in a way where it could ignore inertia!

Azell had jumped in thinking it was a great opportunity, but he had jumped into a trap. In a flash, Reygus was able to accelerate its movement, and there was no rhythm to its movement. The attack accelerated in an explosive manner as it struck Azell.

<Lament!>

Kwahhhhhng!

Azell blocked it with his Dragon Maken, but it had already calculated such a response was coming. It activated the power seated within the soul hammer as the shockwave upended the ground. All the clones running along the ground was swept away, and even Azell's real form was sent flying.

<This is it!>

Of course, he didn't think this attack would finish Azell. However, the powerful shockwave would seal the movement of Azell, and it would allow Reygus to inflict a decisive blow! Reygus followed behind the shockwave, and it let out an attack that would be able to destroy a mountain.

However.....

'Uh?'

It expected Azell to be sent flying by the shockwave, but Azell remained in place. The shock wave and the enormous amount of earth was sweeping over him at high speed, yet he looked unperturbed.

At the same time, the name of the phenomena it was witnessing came unbidden into its mind.

‘Endless Plain!

It was a defensive skill that Aunsaurus liked to use with the Vitan’s Chalice. It was a variation on Vitan’s Maze where the nearby space was isolated. It was an unusual technique that prevented attacks for reaching the user.

When the hammer swung by Reygus was about to be brought down, something unbelievable happened. Suddenly, the distance between the two became vast, and it lost sight of Azell. Reygus had ran into a Dimensional Distortion.

Then a white bolt bolt of thunder came towards it.

<Kahhhhhhhhnk!>

The Dragon Maken was morphed into light, and the speed of the attack exceeded even the speed of thought.

This was a trap prepared by Azell. The Dimensional Distortion allowed him to divert his opponent. The distance created allowed him time to use the Heaven Splitter to gain control over light. This was the power of the Dragon Maken. In the past, Laura had used the same move to divert her trackers. He had lured Reygus into the location where he set the trap!

Reygus’ armor crumbled as the darkness contained within started to burn white. At some point, the thunderbolt had changed into a Flame of Purification, which was the bane of the Undead.

The Heaven Splitter had domain over all light, so it was able use any energy that emitted light. This was why it was possible to make this change. Reygus’ body, which had been like an

unassailable fortress, received a critical hit.

“I’ve already ended this ill-fated relationship once! I’ll do so again! Let’s not drag this out, Reygus!”

The unlimited plain that had been between them disappeared as if it had been a lie. The two combatants were back to normal distance. Reygus, who was in bad shape, glared at Azell. However, Azell couldn’t unleash his killing blow.

Ba-dump!

Something hazy appeared in front of him.

A transparent false image in the shape of a young girl appeared in Azell’s vision before it disappeared. Then a ball of fire exploded around him.

Hwahhhhhhhnk!

Azell immediately defended himself by surrounding his body with the magical energy of the flame. Reygus took time to right itself as it landed on the ground.

<Ughh. If you were going to help, you should have done so from the outstart. Women, am I right?.>

Reygus grumbled.

Azell became more vigilant as he looked at his surrounding. He couldn’t sense anything amiss. It had been a powerful enough magician to interfere with the battle between Reygus and him, yet there was no scent of magic left behind.....

‘What was it?’

Reygus spoke in front of the wary Azell.

<Well, she said she won’t interfere again, so you don’t have to worry about it. Anyways, I almost didn’t get my money’s worth. I might disappeared before I fought for real.>

“Are you going to give me some lame reason like you still haven’t

show your real strength yet?”

<Correct!>

Reygus spoke with a cheerful voice as its appearance went through a rapid change.

2

The Keepers of the Prophecy could be called the nucleus of the Guardian Shadows. It could also be said that they were beings that had severe wear and tear.

They were alive, yet they weren't alive. They had lost the memories of their previous lives, and they didn't age. Their motivation for living was their hatred and desire to wipe out the Dragon Demon King worshippers.

Even as several dozens of years passed, their hatred showed no signs of abating. However, they were tired. As they continued to fight, they realized that this was a fight with no end.

They had no idea how they'll able to end this vendetta.....

The Guardian Shadows were strong, but they couldn't overwhelm them while they were centralized within the Plain of Darkness. The only thing they could do was to make the Dragon Demon king worshippers more wary as they moved within the human society. They acted as powerful monitors and defenders, but they possessed no methods that would allow them to cut off the evil from the source.

In such a situation, the only hope they had was the prophecy. It was basically like gospel to them. They were similar to believers that endured hardship, while they waited to be saved by god. They fought in an endless fight for dozens of years with the belief that the person from the prophecy would appear some day.

It was funny, but the Dragon Demon king worshippers and the Guardian Shadows were quite similar in that aspect. They were two sides of the same coin.

One side held believed that a prophesied being would eventually appear on day to save them. On the other side, they believed that the dead Dragon Demon king would one day come back to life, and he would make the world into a paradise. They believed the changed world would be gifted to them.

Both sides held to those faith as if it was a religious belief.

It was the same for Balseru.

When he inherited the codename Alpha as a Keeper of Prophecy, he gave up any pursuit any normal human would want to pursue.

His sight was a symbol of what he gave up. The power contained with his eyes required him to close his eyes at all times. He had given up seeing on what the world looked like. He could function as if he had his eyes open using his unique power, but it wasn't the same as seeing the world with his own eyes. For a long while, he was no longer moved by the world.

His eyes only opened when he fought the Dragon Demon king worshippers, and when he did, the world looked foreign to him. He was unfamiliar with the shapes and color of the world, and the beings that lived within the world was strange to him.

Moreover, he was currently seeing a being that was the strangest being in this world..

‘Azell Karzark.’

He was the legendary hero from 220 years ago. He ended the Dragon Demon war by defeating the Dragon Demon king Atein.

After two years into the post-Dragon Demon war, he went missing. No one knew if he was alive or not. Even his best friend, Archmage Carlos, didn't know about his whereabouts. As time passed, many conjectures regarding Azell had cropped up, and now only his legend remained.

When a young man name named Azell Zestringer appeared, they Keepers of the Prophecy thought there was a possibility that he

was the one from the prophecy. This was why they had kept a close eye on him. At times, they tested him, and they also offered help to him. They tried hard to confirm that he was the one they were waiting for.

They had thought Azel Zestringer looked very similar to Azell Karzark inside the portrait. This was why some had theorized that the descendant of Azell Karzark might be the one to end the Dragon Demon king worhsippers.

However.....

They never imagined that he was THE Azell.

“Ha ha ha.....”

Balseru became surprised. A very unfamiliar sound was coming out from his mouth. Even as he realized this, he kept making the sound.

“Ha ha ha ha ha!”

Balseru immediately realized that he was laughing.

When was the last time he laughed? He couldn't remember it.

This was why it sounded so unfamiliar and strange even as his vocal cords made the sound..

<Balseru?>

The Sleepless Guardians were puzzled as they looked towards Balseru. They were with Balseru for several dozens of years, yet they had never seen him laugh. At that moment, they wondered if Balserus had lost his mind.

However, Balseru was sane. He was thing clearer than any point in time.... When he lost his memories, there was a truth that he couldn't approach in his mind. It was concealed within a thick fog, yet this hidden truth came to his consciousness.

It was as if it had been prepared to be revealed for this exact moment.

Balseru, who had been laughing like a mad man, cut off his laughter.

“...I see.”

A voice full of delight flowed out of his mouth.

“So that’s how it is.....!”

Balseru finally realized the true meaning behind the existence of the Keepers of the Prophecy.

His memories had come forth like a flood, and when the tide ebbed, he spoke towards Azell.

3

Ooooooooooooooh.....!

Reygus’ hammer let out an explosive energy that was like a black fog. At the same time, Reygus’ magical energy rose, and it seemed to go on for ages.

‘He might have more magical energy now than when he was alive.’

Azell was surprised.

From what Azell remembered, Reygus was clearly weaker now than before. His physical ability and magical energy was about the same. However, he didn’t possess any Dragon Demon magic.

As a Dragon Arts practitioner, there were many things that they could do, because of the Dragon Demon magic. Even if all other deficiencies can be covered with a Dragon weapon, the loss of Dragon Demon magic was supposed to be a too big of a gulf to bridge.

Currently, Reygus’ magical energy was quickly swelling. He already possessed an incredible amount of magical energy, but now it had doubled in quantity.

An Undead’s ability was based solely on magical energy, so it

meant that his battle capability had increased as well. Azell was tense as he attacked.

‘Nothing good will come from dragging this out!’

Currently, Azell possessed magical energy that was on par with his prime, but he couldn’t maintain it for long. His vessel for his magical energy was incomplete, so his magical energy was overflowing. He was working hard to control the magical energy, and it was taxing for him. He had to end this quickly.

He turned his Dragon Maken into light as he ran across the air. He hit Reygus with a strike that transcended one’s senses.

<You bastard! I’m trying to transform to show you my true power. Don’t you know the etiquette where you have to wait for me?>

Chapter 140 – Second Coming of a Legend (3)

<You bastard! I'm trying to transform to show you my true power. Don't you know the etiquette where you have to wait for me?>

“If I remember correctly, you were the only one in the Dragon Demon king's army that wanted to observe such etiquettes.”

Azell mocked Reygus as he attacked. However, Reygus reacted swiftly. Even after its magical energy doubled, it continued to increase. Reygus was quickly becoming stronger.

<I won't be as easy to deal with as before!>

Reygus reacted with surprising speed as it defended against Azell's fierce attacks. The force didn't need to be loaded onto its muscles, and it wasn't constrained by the need to breathe. Even Azell was having trouble dealing with Reygus at high speed.

Zzuhng!

However, at some point, fire erupted from Reygus' side. Azell had bypassed its defense to hit it with a solid attack.

<What the hell?>

“Your techniques aren't as good as before. I don't know how long you've been an Undead, but it seems you aren't completely used to being one!”

It was just the beginning. Flame erupted from various parts of Reygus' body. Since a Dragon Arts practitioner had lost Dragon Demon magic, it was understandable to see it struggle to use techniques. Azell looked for these openings, and he used his mental waves to confuse Reygus' sense.

<Koo! Shit!>

In a flash, Reygus lifted its soul hammer in a heroic fashion. As if Azell had been waiting for this move, he let out an attack. When

the Dragon Maken was planted within the empty body of Reygus, an explosive sound rang out.

Kwahng!

However, in the next moment, Azell was sent flying as blood sprayed into the air. Reygus shrugged off Azell's stab as if it was nothing, and Reygus counterattacked. Reygus was already dead, so it was nonplussed as it decided to fight in such a manner.

<Sometimes there are advantages to having a dead body! Ha ha ha!>

"You rotten brained bastard!"

Azell grinded his teeth. It wasn't as if he hadn't predicted Reygus would try such a move. However, he was able to pierce it squarely with his Dragon Maken, so he judged that it would be enough to be able to interrupt Reygus' movement.

The only thing that occurred was a portion of its armor and ribs breaking. Reygus had already been sturdy like a fortress, but his defense had strengthened considerably with the rapid increase of its magical energy.

At that moment, someone used whispering to talk to Azell.

-Sir Azell. No... Oh, hero Azell Karzark.

It was Balseru.

-What? I'm busy right now. Can we talk later?

-There is something I have to speak to you about right now.

-What is it?

-I want us to switch opponents.

-What?

It was an unexpected suggestion, so Azell furrowed his brows. Balseru continued to speak.

-We will engage Reygus.

-I thought you guys didn't fare well against Reygus earlier.

-It is so, but we didn't lose either.

-Hmmm.

-We can't win, but at the very least, we can keep it occupied. Wouldn't it be better for you to take care of the others while we do so? We have to get out of here before their reinforcements arrive. I believe getting rid of everyone except Reygus would secure the safety of our comrades. I believe that will be the better option.

-I don't know where that confidence is coming from, but.... All right. I do have other worries, and I accept that your judgement is correct. I'll let you handle it for now. We'll move at the count of three.

-I understand.,

After a count of three, Azell created his clones, and they attacked Reygus. Its broken body parts and armor had been recovered. It raised its hammer in heroic fashion as it parried the attack. However, at that moment, the Dragon Maken held within the clone's hand turned into a thunderbolt as it exploded.

Ggwah-gwah-gwahng!

He used this opportunity to switch places with Balseru and his group.

Reygus was a bit late in realizing this fact, and it was furious.

<Azell! Are you going to run away from a one on one fight between men! You've turned into a coward in the time I haven't seen you!>

"Why don't you speak more reasonably? If you want a fair one on one fight with me, you shouldn't have brought your posse with you. You should come at me alone next time."

<You bastard! Do you really think these bastards will be able to stop me?>

Balseru and two Undead stepped forward to face Reygus.

Reygus noticed it at that moment.

<Mmmm?>

It wasn't running with the same force as before. It was still fast, but it was noticeably slower than before.

Zzuh-uhng!

The Undead Rho blocked the soul hammer. After Reygus' massive increase in magical energy, it was on a different level in regards to power and speed. However, Rho was able to block it thanks to Balseru's power.

<Kook! Is this the thing from before?>

Reygus expressed its annoyance. An outside power was restricting its magical energy. If it was a simple trick used by magicians, Reygus could have unravelled it with a snort. However, it had no idea what method was being used.

The only thing it was sure about was that this phenomenon originated from Balseru's eyes. Just looking at them gave Reygus chills.

<I seems I won't get my answers unless I destroy you!>

Reygus roared as it ran towards Balseru. Rho tried to get in the way, but it was useless. When Rho was about to swing its axe, Reygus accelerated a beat faster to ram its body into Rho.

<Koo-ahk!>

It was as if Rho was hit by a runaway train. It was sent flying. Phi, the fire Undead magician, had been ready to attack when an opportunity was created through Rho's attack. It was taken aback. It was going to attack with magic when Rho stopped Reygus' charge, but the result hadn't occurred in a manner it expected!

<You guys are terrible at adapting to different situations! Brats!>

Reygus maintained his momentum as it sent the Guardian Shadows protecting Balseru flying. It was so fast that Balseru standing in an awkward posture as if he was having a hard time reacting to what was going on.

However, Reygus knew it had made the wrong decision when its hammer was about to come down.

<It seems you have a death wish.>

Balseru rushed forward to swing his sword. Did he really want to receive the blow of the hammer with such a thin sword? He was begging to be crushed.

In the next moment, a pure white light washed over them.

<Ooh-huhk?>

Reygus was taken aback.

When they were about to clash, Reygus' movements suddenly slowed, and Balseru's movements accelerated. It was as if time moved differently for the two of them. Balseru's attack came towards it before the hammer could be swung. Reygus had no choice, but to avoid it in fright.

Reygus staggered backwards as it retreated. It grinded its teeth.

<Shit! It seems he has other talents aside from being able to glare at others?>

Balseru used Instantaneous Movement to charge forward. The thunder-like strike of the sword was blocked by the head of the hammer.

Ddah-ahhhhhhng!

As the ground shook, something unbelievable happened. Reygus was being pushed backwards.

“Koo-oohk.”

Balseru groaned. He felt the force delivered by the clash.

His eyes had absolute power over the Undead. He just had to look at an Undead. No, if he was to be more precise, he could suppress any techniques that dealt with death. This was the ability given to the one with the codename Alpha. Undead beings were supposed to fall under him. They weren't supposed to be able to defy him.

However, Reygus was still displaying incredible battle capabilities. Its power had only lessened by a little bit. This was why he was confronted with a problem he had never worried about.

When he had his eyes closed, it meant his stored magical energy within his eyes had been expended. He would need time to recharge his magical energy.

‘They are similar in some ways.’

Reygus was similar to the ‘Sleepless Guardians’, who guarded the Keepers of Prophecy. It wasn't just the fact that they were outstanding Undead. The energy they were emitting was strikingly similar.

There must be a connection between the two. However, he didn't dwell on such matter right now. He finally knew the true meaning behind destiny, so all he could do was fight with all his might against the enemy in front of him.

‘It is a matter of how long I can last.’

He knew he couldn't win. However, he was trying to come up with a plan that would allow him to stall Reygus. He had to give Azell a little bit more time.

“...Dragon Demon general Reygus.”

A strange light was being emitted from his eyes as Balseru smiled. He had an awkward smile as if he had never laughed before. This was why It was a sickening smile.

“I want to thank you.”

<What?>

“Thanks to you, I.... No, we finally realized what our origin and fate is. I never imagined a time would come where I would have to express my thanks to a Dragon Demon king worshipper.”

A laughter tinged with madness flowed out of Balseru’s mouth.

4

Azell’s party was fighting well in conjunction with the Guardian Shadows. However, there was one person, who was in danger. She had been isolated from her party.

“Ha-ah, ha-ah.....”

It was Laura.

She looked disheveled as she tried to get her breathing under control. In an one on one battle, she was able to dominate Dikal. However, she was helpless against the relentless attacks by the Shadow’s Sword Belt.

Even if Laura was a powerful magician, her opponents had all been candidates that had fought for the title to be heir. Their achievements in the study of magic was a bit lacking, but all thirty of them were linked through Dragon Demon magic. Moreover, they were under the control of Dikal, and they were being used effectively against her. Of course, she would be on the losing side.

She was busy blocking endless magic spells coming from all sides that she hadn’t realized that she had been separated from her comrades. She was 2 kilometers away from the main battlefield.

This was why she couldn’t expect help from her comrades. Of course, this was what Dikal had been aiming for.

“It seems even the great Ms. Laura is showing signs of tiring?”

Dikal let out a nasty laughter.

There was no way he could win against her in an one on one battle. However, he commanded the power of the disqualified

candidates. He felt an unsightly joy at cornering her.

Laura didn't have the luxury to answer him. The Shadow's Sword Belt didn't want her to catch her breath, so they kept sending spells towards her.

'He plans on taking me alive.'

Dikal's intent was clear. If they had been aggressive in their attempt to kill Laura, she would already be dead by now. However, they were trying to catch her alive at all costs.

They blocked Laura from contacting her allies, and they had slowly isolated her. Then they kept chipping away at her stamina and magical energy. In the process, Dikal felt a sadistic joy.

"Your fate is sealed, Laura."

"....."

"The elders want to see the face of the traitor. You already know what will happen next, right? Even if you did betray us, you were an outstanding subject. You might bear the children of the the next generation by receiving our seed or maybe you'll just become a test subject. It won't matter which fate is chosen for you. You'll be in a hell appropriate for a traitor."

The malice he displayed was hair-raising. She would rather die than be caught by the Plain of Darkness. They had the ability to make her experience hell. In an attempt to appease the Aunsaurus family, Dikal would willingly throw Laura into hell.

"Let's see....."

As the encircling net backed off, Dikal stepped forward. At the same time, a hole was punched through the wall of fire that Laura had been fighting against.

Puh-uhng!

"Kyahkkk!"

Laura let out a scream as she was pushed backwards. Dikal had

intentionally made this hole. Laura was well aware of this fact. In such a situation, she had to try something even if it was a longshot.

It was as if he had been waiting for her response. He deflected Laura's magic. Then he overpowered her.

“Ha ha ha ha! Is that all you got? If you were going to end it like this, why did you trouble us so?”

“.....”

Laura glared at him. Dikal made an invidious remark.

“Hmmph. That's right, Laura. You were right. I did come here too early.”

Chapter 141 – Second Coming of a Legend (4)

“Hmmp. That’s right, Laura. You were right. I did come here too early.”

He was stubborn as a mule, so he left behind the Shadow’s Sword Belt to fight one on one with Laura. However, he couldn’t hold a candle to her. This truth greatly wounded his pride.

“However, that is all there is to it. You merely had more time to learn more magic than me! If those old bags weren’t so picky about passing on their techniques, I would have needed a little bit more time. I wouldn’t have lost to you!”

“Dikal, I....”

Suddenly, Laura raised her hands, and she placed them on her neck. She let out a forlorn laughter as she spoke.

“...this is the first time I felt sorry for someone.”

“What?”

“You are a pitiful person. More so than my previous self....”

In the past, Laura had been a puppet of the Aunsaurus family. She lived to bring about the result desired by them.

Dikal was similar to her in that fashion. However, there was a big difference between Dikal and her.

Dikal based his own self worth on their judgement, and he accepted that fact as a given.

He was subjected to what amounted to a curse, yet he still thirsted for their approval. He cursed them with his mouth, but he would do anything to hear their praises. He had no idea what else to base his own self worth on.

“I can see why I hated myself.”

When she first met him, Laura considered his hatred to be a

given. His life had been stolen away by her. Of course, he would hate her.

However, as she listened to Dikal's words, she realized there was something more to this. The real reason why Dikal hated Laura was.....

"I threw away what you clung to as if it was trash."

"What nonsense.....!"

"I think I can understand what you are feeling. Still, I will assert it once again."

A red air current started emanating from the tip of her fingers, which she had placed on her throat.

"They are trash. They are trash that should have been eradicated a long time ago, yet they act as they please by stepping on our lives."

"Shut up!"

"I'd rather die than be caught within their hands."

Dikal flinched. He had been focusing on her words, so he was a beat late in realizing what was going on.

"Shit! Stop her!"

Laura was trying to commit suicide.

She would rather die here than be caught by them. However, it wouldn't be enough just to take her own life. They had the power to call back the souls of the dead. This was why she had to terminate herself in no uncertain terms.

'I want to live.'

She wanted to live a bit longer. She had so much more she wanted to see.

'I finally found out who you really are.'

Suddenly, Azell's face appeared within her thoughts. She had

always wondered about it, but he really was the hero Azell Karzark.

When it was in regards to him, everything was on the table. When she found out the truth, she laughed even in the midst of danger. She didn't feel any surprise. It simply cleared up the pressure she felt inside her chest.

‘If I die here, will you mourn for me?’

Up until now, she had no one that would have shed a tear for her if she died. She hadn't lived her life worrying about such things. However, while she travelled with Azell's party using the excuse of being a prisoner, she developed lingering attachments.

‘At the very least, they won't get angry, because a tool had become unusable. They would view it as my death, simple as that.’

Laura was baffled by her thoughts, so she laughed. Dikal and the Shadow's Sword Belt looked at her as if she had gone mad. She had put a defensive magic around here, so they had to watch as she completed the cursed power.

-You give up too quickly.

At that moment, a voice flowed into her consciousness.

-Why don't you put a little bit more faith in your comrades?

The magic spells that had been pouring out towards her was rapidly dissipating. Moreover....

Ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh!

A pure white light that looked like white fire and lighting ran across the sky.

It was the Sky Splitter. While Laura was distracted, three members of the Shadow's Sword Belt was cut down from the surprise attack.

At the same time as the magic and thunder detonated, her surrounding became distorted as if it was a hot day in spring.

‘Vitan’s Maze!’

Laura immediately recognized the identity of the phenomena.

She quickly canceled the power of the curse as if she was putting out a fire.

“Ah-oohk.....”

She was able to cancel it, but it was a magic where even her corpse would have been destroyed. She hadn’t wanted to hand over anything to her enemies. This was why the backlash was fierce. Black smoke emanated from her entire body, and she felt her insides churn.

She suddenly spoke in a sullen manner.

“...I’m only a prisoner.”

“You were until now.”

Azell suddenly appeared next to her. Azell smirked as he gave his answer. Azell spoke as he tapped her once with his finger.

“Let’s stop doing this.”

The magical shunt placed with Laura’s Energy Pulse was removed. Laura looked at Azell with rabbit eyes.

“You really do whatever you want.”

“Everyone told me the same thing around 220 years ago. It seems the era may change, but people do not.”

“Old man.”

“But my body and mind is still that of a 28 year old. There’s no reason why I should hear such words from a Dragon Majin lady who is older than me.”

“You are shameless.”

“I hear that a lot too.”

Azell replied in a sly manner.

“Anyways, you should take care of your body from within this place. I’ll take care of the rest.”

He didn’t know if his enemies had techniques that could penetrate the Vitan’s Maze. Even if they did have such a technique they would be too busy fighting Azell to use it.

However, Laura grabbed Azell before he could exit the Vitan’s Maze.

“I’ll take care of Dikal.”

“With that body? I know you have some kind of history with him, but if you fight in such a state....”

“I can do it.”

“.....”

Laura’s attitude was so firm that Azell just watched her for a moment. He turned his head away as he let out a bitter laugh.

“Whether it’s the present or the past, I’m unable to stop anyone who’s willing to risk their lives on a task. A lot of people cursed me for it.....”

He continued to speak as he canceled the Vitan’s Maze.

“It seems I’ll be the one cursing you out. If your bravado gets you killed, I’ll curse at you.”

“...this is the first time.”

“What is?”

“This is the first time I’ve heard such words.”

“You have too many firsts.”

As he spoke those words, Azell’s sword turned into burning thunder as it sped along the sky.

Dikal was in a state of panic.

When he found out Azell was really the Azell Karzark, he was shaken up for only a brief moment. At that moment, the capture of Laura had been more important in his mind.

He had been tenacious in his hunt, and at last, his goal had been right in front of his eyes.

However, this had occurred.

The flash of light was actively moving across the sky.

Normally, magicians were adept at fighting in the air. Spirit Order practitioners and Dragon Arts practitioners were able to stay in the air for a limited amount of time. Even if that problem was solved, they had no way of propelling themselves through the air. This was why it was hard to fight a magician in aerial combat.

However, Azell ruthlessly broke such common sense.

Pah-jee-jee-jeeek!

The light was moving in every direction, and it cut through one of the Shadow's Sword Belt. For a brief moment, Azell could be seen, so another member of the Shadow's Sword Belt sent a flame towards him.

However, it was useless. Spatial Distortion appeared in front of him, and the flame was sent right back to the user.

When the attacker paused to block the flame, another Azell appeared from behind to cut him in half.

“Oooh ooh ooh.....!”

Dikal was terrified.

The Sword Splitter and the Vitan's Chalice was creating a synergistic effect. The attacks were beyond one's imagination. The sword wasn't constrained by space, yet now the additional effect of dimensional manipulation was added on to it. The combination of the two was a calamity that no one could stop.

Moreover, the Shadow's Sword Belt hadn't studied the available information in regards to Azell. From the onset, they had used lighting and light magic without thinking much about it. They had pretty much sealed their own death. The Sky Splitter absorbed it all as all six members were burnt to a crisp.

"Dikal."

Light and the roar of thunder filled the battlefield.

However, a low voice could be heard clearly within Dikal's ears. He turned to look at the owner of the voice in surprise.

The thoroughly injured Laura was standing there glaring at him.

"Let's end this. This is between the two of us."

"Ha....."

Dikal laughed as he couldn't believe what he had just heard.

"Are you out of your mind? Now that you've jumped on the back of Azell Karzark, it seems you've gone mad. You want to fight me one on one in that state?"

"Yes."

"Hmmp. Do you think I'll fall for such a trap? You will probably act like you are fighting me, and Azell Karzark would use the opportunity to hit me from behind."

At his words, Laura tilted her head in puzzlement.

"Do you really think you are worth doing such a maneuver?"

"...what did you just say?"

"If it wasn't for my request, you would already be dead. I extracted a promise from him. If you win against me in a one on one battle against me, he'll let you leave the battlefield alive."

Laura had been adamant about this point.

When he realized she was serious, Dikal grinded her teeth.

“How long are you going to ignore me like this, Laura!”

“That is what I want to say to you.”

Laura attacked first. When Dikal received her attack, something incomprehensible occurred.

Pah-jee-jee-jeek!

“Kuh-uhk?”

He possessed six swords that had a curse placed on each of them. Each curse was flowing backwards now. His eyesight started to darken as openings appeared within his formation of magic.

Ggwah-gwahng!

An explosion detonated from within his barrier. He was sent flying. Dikal was barely able to right himself as he plummeted to the floor, and he started using his magic indiscriminately.

“Koo-ahhhhhhhhhk!”

Unlike Laura who was dying, he had plenty of magical energy. Laura was superior to him in terms of using magic, but he decided she wouldn't be able to cut through the hail of magic spells.

However, as if to break Dikal's prediction, he heard Laura's cold voice.

“You don't even know why you are losing.....”

There was pity in her voice. Dikal became angry, so he tried to send the magic swords towards her.

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhhk!”

As if it had been waiting for him to try that move, the curses flowed backwards again. It felt as if the pain was frying every single nerve inside his body.

Dikal finally realized what she had done.

‘I've lost ownership of the magic swords!’

If he was to be precise, he hadn't lost complete ownership of the magic swords. However, the part of the magic that allowed one to move the magic swords was in her control.

Hoo-oooooooooooooh.....

While Dikal was barely able to dispel the curse, Laura's condition was rapidly improving. Her physical state wasn't getting better, but she had taken control of the magical energy expended in vain by Dikal. She was absorbing it to recover her magical energy. She was displaying an appalling amount of refinement in her control over her magical energy.

"This is the end, Dikal."

"How laughable! You've created some confusion using my magical tools, yet you act as if the fight is over! You've required only a modicum of magical energy. It won't be enough!"

Dikal unleashed his magical energy in anger.

'I only have the use of defensive magic and magic amplification of the magic swords. I'll have to use the two functions to end this. I have to overwhelm her with my magical energy. Even if she is better than me at using skills, the difference in the quantity of magical energy available to me is absolute. I'll crush her with my firepower!'

His judgement was correct. Laura's magical energy was almost depleted. He could use several dozen spells, while his opponent could use only one or two spells. The result was preordained.

In the end, he pushed back against Laura's control with pure power. He used all of his magic at once. A vortex formed on the ground. A storm of lightning raged, and flame exploded forth.

"You are the one that will meet your end here, Laura!"

He shouted out those words as he felt enraptured.

"It is as I've said. This is the end."

Laura answered in a low voice. The sound cut through the noise of the explosion. It meant she had used her magic in a narrow scope to deliver her voice on purpose. Goosebumps arose all over his entire body. All the spells he sent towards Laura returned towards Dikal.

Kwah-gwah-gwah-gwahng!

“Kahhhh.....!”

Even Dikal’s scream was buried in the sound of the explosions. Dikal fell as fire and smoke surrounded his body.

Laura tracked him down.

Soon, Laura stood in front of Dikal. It looked as if half of his body had been blown off, and he was gasping for breath.

It was a miracle that he was still alive. He asked in disbelief.

“How....?”

“Vitan’s Chalice.”

Laura answered him.

“I’ve been researching it all this time.”

“.....”

Dikal was satisfied with the answer.

No one inside the Plain of Darkness had been able to learn magic that dealt with space. However, Laura had used the Vitan’s Chalice. After much research and experiments, she was able to replicate some of the magic.

Dikal laughed as if he was baffled.

“I...really...did come here...too soon.....”

“They will perish too, so you can go rest now.”

“Ha ha ha. As always.... You are really an unpleasant....woman.....”

After saying those words, Dikal's life came to an end. Laura created fire to burn his corpse. She looked up at the brilliant and deadly light moving across the sky.

“Those words.... I've heard them way too much.”

As she looked into the empty air, clear tears ran down from her eyes.

Chapter 142 – Second Coming of a Legend (5)

6

When Azell was free of Reygus, the situation on the battlefield quickly changed.

Before he went to save Laura, Azell had already swept the battlefield near his allies. He had already caused massive damage to his enemies. Kairen, Leticia, Yuren and the Guardian Shadows had been fighting an even battle when Azell performed a surprise attack. The Dragon Demon King worshippers were mowed down like rotten sheaves of wheat.

However, their advantage lasted only a moment.

Go-oh-oh-oh-oh.....!

In a flash, everyone's attention was gathered at one location.

Something that surpassed common sense was occurring.

Balseru, who was covered in dirt, was taken aback.

“It is changing magical energy into Dragon Demon magic.....!”

It was as he said. Reygus' magical energy was changing into Dragon Demon magic.

This was supposed to be impossible. Dragon Demon magic was the power of the living. Despite Reygus being a 1st generation Dragon Demon, it was an Undead. Its lost Dragon Demon magic should have been unrecoverable.

In front of the shocked Balseru, Reygus' armor started to change. The ominous black armor and the Soul Hammer was being bleached white. Its helmet had been open as its skull had been on display. However, a mask dropped down, and the helmet started changing into the shape of a Dragon's head.

<Hoo-oooooooooh.....!>

The sound of a long breath was heard coming from within Reygus' helmet. 0|It was already dead, so it was only making the noise. However, as if responding to the sound, a black current of air exited.

<If you were able to defeat me before this, I would have praised you. However, you are out of your depth now. Well, what's your move now?>

The amassing of incredible amount of magical energy was in preparation for this change. It took some time to max out his magical energy. It had needed time to complete its transformation.

Reygus had faced some trouble, because it faced Balseru, who was the natural enemy of the Undead. However, that was no longer true now.

Balseru broke out in cold sweat.

“...what nonsense.”

After its transformation, the power of Balseru's eyes didn't work against it. The suppressed power returned with a vengeance, and Balseru could feel a pressure that made it hard for him to breathe. Currently, the amount of Dragon Demon magic exceeded the amount Reygus had possessed in life.

<Well, it is time to wrap this up!>

Reygus activated its Dragon Demon magic as it charged forward. A gust arose behind its path.

Kwahng!

Rho tried to get in its way, but it was in vain. Reygus reacted much faster by ramming its body into Rho, and it brought down its Soul Hammer..

<Kah-ahhhhhhhk.....!>

Rho let out a scream.

Most of the time Undead did not feel pain. However, Reygus'

Dragon weapon was called the Soul Hammer. As its name indicated, it had the power to break souls. There was physical damage from being hit by the Soul Hammer, but exquisite pain and shock was felt by Rho. It felt as if its soul was being ripped into pieces.

Too-doo-doo-doong!

The Undead magician Phi shot thunder towards Reygus. Reygus hadn't retrieved its hammer yet, so it had to take the attack with its body. It was pushed backwards.

Soon, a blue flame erupted around Reygus' body. The blue flames didn't emit physical heat, but it pushed back the thunder spell. Reygus originally had powerful defensive magic layered around it, but this flame had the power to cancel magic.

Kwahng!

Accompanying the sound of an explosion, half of Phi's body was destroyed. When Reygus ran in, Phi focused on its defensive magic as it retreated. However, Reygus' blue flames canceled out the barrier before it rushed towards Phi.

<Koo-ahk.....!>

As expected, the Undead felt a pain it had never felt before after becoming an Undead. Still, Phi managed to point its unbroken arm towards Reygus.

Puh-uhng!

A thunderbolt exploded on Reygus' head. It sent Reygus flying, but it immediately righted itself. Reygus laughed.

<Koo-hahaha! You are quite tenacious! I thought you would have forgotten about how pain felt as an Undead! I thought you would become distracted by even a small amount of pain!>

<You wild pig bastard.....!>

Phi grinded its teeth. If it was just physical damage, it could

recover in an instant even with such heavy damage. However, the Soul Hammer possessed the power to damage souls, so the recovery of its body had slowed significantly.

Reygus let out a cheerful laugh.

<I've heard that phrase quite often. Well, it is time for you brats to return to your graves.>

<As an Undead, we are your elders. You are a reckless simpleton.>

Rho was barely able to stand up. It spoke sharp words towards Reygus.

Balseru, who was behind them, spoke.

"Phi. Rho."

<Speak.>

The Undead magician Rho didn't turn around as it gave a reply.

"I'm sorry. You guys will have to die for me."

<I'm already dead, so what's the point of asking me to die?>

<Whether I meet my end this way or some other way, it is all the same to me. You do what you have to do.>

Phi also muttered his words.

Reygus looked on with interest. It didn't ask Balseru about the meaning behind his words. Reygus really acted in a manner consistent with how he spoke.

If he could squeeze out some kind of hidden card from his opponents, he would willingly wait for them even if it could endanger it.

Balseru's eyes emitted light. This light transferred over to Phi and Rho.

<Ooh-ahhhhhhhhhhh!>

Phi and Rho let out a scream. Their bodies were quickly restored as their magical energy exploded upwards.

Reygus' eyes shone.

<Ho-oh! Is this a hidden card that can only be used as a suicidal attack?>

It was as Reygus had said. Phi and Rho's magical energy had increased to twice its size, but that was the catch. They would be destroyed as cost for using this power.

Moreover, they wouldn't last long against Reygus even in this state.

7

-Are you running away by yourself while you leave your comrades to die?

Balseru was running full tilt, and he let out a bitter laugh at Azell's angry words.

It was as his words implied. He had overclocked the power of Phi and Rho. They were used as sacrifices so he could escape. While he escaped the battlefield, Phi and Rho was about to be destroyed at any moment now..

Balseru answered him.

"I'll be following after them soon. However, I cannot die right now. For now... I'll have to remove myself to rule out the probability of my death."

-What nonsense are you talking about?

"You will find out soon, hero Azell Karzark."

After his words ended, Balseru's presence vanished. Azell grinded his teeth when Balseru hid himself like a ghost.

A heavy sound rang out in front of him.

Koong!

The ground shook. The rising cloud of dust dispersed as Reygus' enormous white body approached him.

Phi and Rho's fallen forms were next to it. The two had met their end. Their consciousness could no longer be felt. When the magical energy within their body dispersed, their skeleton would break down and disperse.

<Hmm. I was very angry before, but I feel thankful now.>

"What nonsense are you talking?"

<They were pretty good sparring partners. Thanks to them I can fight you once again at full strength.>

"Do you not realize that you are close to being alone now?"

It was as he said.

Balseru and the two Undead hadn't occupied Reygus for long. However, the outcome of the battle was determined during that brief time period. The Dragon Demon king worshippers were truly cornered thanks to Azell's active role in battle.

Reygus looked at his surrounding.

<Jeez. Whether it is the past or now, it's the same.>

During the Dragon Demon war, Reygus ignored what was going on in his surrounding as he fought like a berserker. His battle style was basically like a hurricane sweeping through the battlefield. This was why his allies didn't fight with him, and the commanders had to take his quirk into consideration when coming up with battle tactics.

Basically, Reygus did whatever it pleased, so it was familiar with the situation where its allies were on a brink of defeat.

<I'll have to hold out until our reinforcements come.>

"I'll end this before that occurs."

<That is what I hoped you would say.>

A delighted laughter flowed out from Reygus' helmet. The two legendary figures once again clashed.

8

The Undead do not tire. They weren't bound by a body's structural limit like the range of motion of joints. On top of all of that, their ability increased as their magical energy increased.

Still, the Undead form of Reygus was weaker than its previous living form, because it had a crucial weakness.

Basically, Reygus had lost its Dragon Demon magic.

Even if the quantity of magical energy was about the same as before, Reygus was a Dragon Arts practitioner. The loss of the Dragon Demon magic was too big of a loss. Even if it was an expert, there was a limit as to how much of an adjustment it could make to its fighting style. There was a clear ceiling even if Reygus trained diligently.

However, Reygus had used some unknowable method to regain its Dragon Demon magic, and it was stronger than when it was alive.

Azell realized this fact from just a single exchange of blows.

From the beginning, Azell had overextended himself to produce a power that his vessel couldn't contain. Even if he was adept at controlling the effects with his techniques, he couldn't completely erase all the backlash. As time passed, the burden on his body increased, and his movements slowed.

On the other hand, Reygus didn't suffer from such problems.

No, it had become much stronger after its transformation.

“Koohk!”

Azell was busy expanding the number of his clones. Azell groaned as he backed off. However, Reygus used Instantaneous Movement to track him down, and it swung its hammer at terrifying speed.

Too-hahk!

His stance was half broken, so Azell couldn't block the attack. However, the Dragon Majin immediately turned into light to hit the Soul Hammer from the side.

Then.....

Kwahng! Kwah-kwahng!

Azell's clones hit Reygus with consecutive attacks when his defense faltered. Each clone used every magical energy they possessed to hit Reygus, but it barely took any damage. It only retreated haltingly, and its armor remained unbroken.

This continued on like this for a while.

If one was just counting the number of attacks one got in, Azell was winning in an overwhelming fashion. Azell hadn't taken a hit yet. On the other hand, Reygus was being hit countless of times as it was sent flying.

It wasn't as if Reygus was inexperienced in terms of technique. It moved like a heavy tank, so its style looked unrefined. However, its techniques and perception was top notch. Above all else, this style was impossible to pull off if one didn't have a sturdy body. This was true whether in life or death.

Azell's techniques shone against such an opponent. No matter what it did Azell could turn away its defense to create an opportunity. Azell repeatedly applied his attacks.

However, technique wasn't the only factor that determined the victory or defeat of a battle.

<This is unfortunate. It is true that you are stronger in some aspect. However, you became weaker overall?>

"You are getting beaten like a drum, yet you speak such bold words.."

Azell glared at it as he bluffed.

In comparison to Azell during the Dragon Demon war...

To be precise, his techniques and senses had increased significantly compared to the Azell before Reygus' death. The Sky Splitter also had evolved to a much superior form of Dragon weapon.

Of course, his body was much stronger than his past self.

He had increased his physical ability, and the vessel to hold his magical energy was much larger.

However, he had to burden himself to raise his magical energy to a level comparable to his prior self. However, the clincher was the fact the his pool of Dragon Demon magic was too shallow, so his techniques were less effective.

Reygus felt regret this point. After waking up in this era, he had met his favorite and most enjoyable opponent, yet Azell wasn't at full strength yet.

Suddenly, Azell stopped as he put on a baffled expression on his face.

It was because Reygus had stopped attacking to speak.

Chapter 143 – Second Coming of a Legend (6)

<Your techniques have improved. This is true even if I discount the very odd function developed by the Sky Splitter. I should have stuck around a little bit longer to see how far you were able to develop.>

“Hoo-ooh. I was able to regain my breath thanks to your speech, so I shouldn’t be saying this.... You always get too absorbed in the fight. You forget your goals. Doesn’t your side hate this part about you?”

<Ha ha ha. I’ve always been a bit manly. A man should always act manly. Of course, such actions buys hate from the narrow-minded beings. However, how can I live in a manly way if I try to appease them?>

“...you do realize I’m disparaging you by calling you an idiot right now, right?”

<I don’t care if I hear such words or not. This world doesn’t hold much interests to me. My life doesn’t hold much that interests for me either. I can’t even enjoy the best alcohols any more. What is there left to enjoy in my life? If they are small minded enough to try to restrict the activities that brings joy to my soul, I’d rather they leave our side.>

“Wow.....”

Azell was impressed. This guy was more of an idiot than he had imagined. It wasn’t as if Reygus didn’t know it was doing something idiotic. It knew it was doing something stupid, yet it went through with his actions. Reygus did whatever it felt like doing!

“...ah. Truthfully, you did annoy me, but in a weird way, I didn’t hate you. That is how dumb you were.”

<Koo-uh. This is quite unfortunate. If you were a beautiful

woman, I would have accepted that as a confession. How can I not enjoy myself fully when someone like you is in front of me. I, Reygus, live and fight as a warrior. I don't want to leave any regret behind!>

“You died, because you ignored what was going on in your surrounding yet you haven't changed. Amazing.”

<The fact that I didn't change is a good thing. Humans think change as a virtue. There is a beauty to something that never changes, and humans can't stand that. I fought next to the king for this very value.>

Reygus spoke in an imposing manner.

His words made it clear that this being was a completely disqualified from being a general. Reygus also knew this truth. It had the title of Dragon Demon general, but Reygus always let its underlings command the battle. It fought on its own. It did whatever it wanted, yet Reygus was an indispensable part of the Dragon Demon king's army.

Many strategists from the Demon King army spoke about it lament.

‘If general Reygus fixed his personality a little bit, he would be the best!’

Many in the human allied forces had the same thought.

‘We are quite fortunate that Reygus has such a personality.’

Reygus was unchanging even at the end. That was why he had died. It was also why Reygus could laugh without any regret.

It had woken up as an Undead after 220 years, yet it hadn't changed..

Suddenly, Azell asked a question.

“You haven't changed, but everything around you have changed. Do you really think the bastards in the Plain of Darkness is worth

fighting with?”

<Hmmm. Are you trying to sow discord? Knock it off. It isn't like you to do this.>

“I'm not doing that. I'm simply curious. When I awoke in this era, I was shocked to find the existence of the Dragon Demon king worshippers. Moreover, I was shocked in many ways to see what kind of actions were carried out by the bastards within the Plain of Darkness. During the Dragon Demon war, I hated you guys, but how should I say this.... It feels as if things have progress to the extreme.”

<You words.... So you haven't been active while I was asleep. It means your consciousness was put to sleep for a long time. You awoke in this era like me?>

“.....”

<Ee-yah. I gained information through my enemy making an a slip of the tongue. This is quite a novel experience.>

“Ughh.”

Azell's expression crumpled. Of all the people he could have made a slip of the tongue to, he had made the mistake against the being that was the prime example of someone that gave away information to the enemy!

Reyqus laughed uproariously.

<Yes. In truth, I don't like what our guys are doing these days. They lack a backbone and guts. Above all else, they are quite gloomy!>

“...mmm.”

Reyqus was an Undead with only its skeleton left. From within the darkness, it spoke such dismal words that would have undermined the morale of his allies. If the Demon King worshippers could hear this, wouldn't they feel aggrieved?

Reygus continued to speak as Azell had these thoughts.

<They completely changed into a religious cult, so I do feel bad for the young ones. They should be able to see and think for themselves. Even the option of choosing with their heart had been stolen away. I hate to see pretty ladies feeling depressed when such dark madness are imposed on them. If it was the past, I would have consoled them with my fabulous body, but I can't any more. It is a shame in many ways.>

“.....”

<Still, my heart remains unchanged. I sympathize with whatever orders given by the magician Atein. He is my king, and that fact remains true even now.>

“As expected, it seems Atein's revival isn't too far off. Your awakening is a precursor to that event.”

<We are even with this... Or did I reveal something that is worth more? Tsk tsk. Well, I don't care, since I'm always like this.>

“You really are incorrigible.”

<Ha ha ha. Since I've given you this much time, you should have recovered your breathe by now. Why don't you reveal some of your hidden cards now? I really regret the fact that I wasn't able to fight you when you defeated the true king. I paid an incredible price to become this strong..... I can no longer eat meat again, and my flag downstairs will never be raised again...>

“.....”

Even the great Azell was at a loss for words. He should want to trip Reygus up, yet he was having a hard time putting himself in the mood to do so.

<Even I had ended the fight when you were weakened, wouldn't it have been a waste? Since I did something very stupid, a smart guy like you should bring out a move that would turn the table on me. It'll be delicious when I volley your move and crush you!>

“I will show my respect towards the stupidity that had endured for over 200 years. I’ll do as you wish. It is as you’ve said, you wasted enough time for me to be able to use my secret card.”

As he spoke, Azell’s voice started erupting with power. As he walked, it looked as if there was an image superimposed over Azell. He took one step as his image shook. When he took a second step, an exact replica of himself appeared next to him. Both figures took a third step as the superimposed images shook. When they took the fourth step, the number of Azells doubled once again.

In a flash, 32 Azells were surrounding Reygus.

<You Incarnation skill have gotten much better. Even Almarick couldn’t do what you are doing right now.>

“Almarick... He looked like an idiot, but he really was great with techniques. He’s the opposite of you.”

Azell’s voice rang from all direction. They didn’t open their mouths at the same time, yet the words were strung together perfectly.

<However, this can’t be everything, right? I acknowledge that you are able to amplify your power by combining your sword and your clones. However, it won’t work against me. Moreover, you are running out of magical energy.>

Reygus’ observation was sharp and right on target.

Azell was given time to gather his breathe, but his magical energy was constantly on the decline. He kept using power that overflowed from his vessel, and this was the backlash of constantly using that method. Even if he was exceptional in skill and will, there was nothing he could do about his physical limitations. The limit to using his Dragon weapon was fast approaching.

The 32 Azells let out a savage laugh.

“Of course, this isn’t all of it. Well, Reygus! I’ll do as you wish! I’ll show you the true worth of the Sky Splitter, which was able to cut

down Atein!”

The Dragon Majin had replicated alongside the 32 Azells, and they roared at once. The swords abandoned their physical form, and they resolved into something that looked like flame and thunder at the same time. The pure white light moved through the air.

<Mmm!>

Reygus was faster and stronger compared to when it was alive. However, it was impossible to dodge the Sky Splitter. No matter how fast its reaction speed had increased, it was impossible for Reygus to see the Sky Splitter which had dematerialized.

The only thing Reygus could do was to create a broad barrier and endure the attacks. When opponents faced the dematerialized Sky Splitter, they gave up on pin-point defense. It wasted a lot of power, but one had no choice but to use a broad defense. Reygus was no exception. No, such a tactic was actually Reygus’ specialty.

However, the current situation was a bit different from before.

His reaction speed had increased significantly, so Reygus was able to see a world that he had never been able to see before. He could now clearly discern the path of most Instantaneous movements. He had entered the world of ultrahigh speed.

This was the reason why Azell was on the losing end as he attacked.

Azell’s attacks weren’t weak. Even if Reygus style had reached the pinnacle of tanking attacks, it couldn’t avoid having its movements restricted. It couldn’t avoid taking damage.

However, Reygus was able to defend in a more efficient manner, and it cut into the effectiveness of Azell’s attacks.

Up until now, all his enemies had given up defending the dematerialized Sky Splitter with accuracy. However, Reygus was able to do so.

‘Left chest.’

This didn’t mean it could counteract every attack. The attacks from the dematerialized Dragon Majin was too numerous. It was hard to tell which attacks held power behind it and which attacks were feints.

However, Reygus was able to identify some of the attacks. It couldn’t pick up the attacks that were coming in at speed of light. However, there were times when Azell’s clone had to transform back into physical form. When it caught sight of them, it was able to read the path of the attacks.

‘Right knee.’

A human who hadn’t learned Spirit Order couldn’t dodge an arrowing using one’s eyes. However, it was possible to observe the archer’s movement to predict the timing and path of the arrow. It would allow one to dodge the attack.

Reygus was using the the same concept right now. Countless attacks were coming towards it, yet Reygus was able to pick out certain attacks. It allowed Reygus to properly defend against several blows. Every time it was successful in its defense, it cut through the shower of light attacking it.

‘It’ll be the same again!’

The attacks performed by Azell’s 32 forms were like a real storm. However, they couldn’t breakthrough Reygus!

It was at that moment when he had a thought.

“Reygus, do you know why my Dragon Majin is called the ‘Sky Splitter’?”

One of Azell’s clone locked weapons with Reygus as he whispered those words. When it put strength into the hands gripping the Soul Hammer, the resistance disappeared. From beyond the clone, Reygus saw a sight it had never seen before.

<This is.....!>

The sky parted.

It wasn't as if the sky was cloudy. It was a clear sunny day. However, an oppressive amount of light pierced through the sky.

It was as if an enormous tree made out of light that sprouted. A pillar of light connected the earth and the sky. Moreover, there were numerous branches made out of light extending outwards.

It was as if someone had magnified an image at the moment when thunderbolt hit the ground. The branches of light extended in all directions. In the middle of the light, Azell was glaring down at Reygus.

<This is your secret card!>

Reygus voice couldn't hide the overflowing joy it was feeling. It gripped its Soul Hammer as it cocked it backwards.

There wasn't a single iota of fear in Reygus. It was like facing a comet when it was coming straight towards the beach. In the face of certain calamity, Reygus' fighting spirit was unyielding.

<It's burning! Koo-hahaha! Soul Hammer! Make the earth tremble!>

Koo-goo-goo-goo-gooo!

The earth shook as Reygus stood at the epicenter. Clouds of dust rose into the air. From deep within the earth, an enormous power arose as it was focused within the Soul Hammer.

Reygus' presence was becoming more and more larger.

For a brief moment, they exchanged gazes. Azell didn't wait for it to reach its peak power.

'I'll end it with this!'

It was Reygus had surmised. Azell's magical energy was in decline. The time limit in which he could summon the Dragon

weapon was approaching.

He could last longer using a complete Dragon weapon in the Vitan's Chalice. However, he decided to use the final attack with the Sky Splitter. The time he could bring out the Dragon Majin had increased considerably when he increased his magical energy and the vessel that held his power. However, there was a limit.

This was why this was his last chance. He was fortunate that Reygus was obsessed with the process of a battle instead of winning and losing. This was why he was given the chance to bring up all his remaining power. He was able to use his best secret technique.

Sun Lightsaber!

At that moment, the pillar of light connecting sky and earth dispersed into countless swords.

Hundreds, thousands, hundred thousands, millions.... It was impossible to count them all. The overwhelming number of light swords flew through the air. There was so many swords that it looked as if they combined to make a tidal wave. It swallowed everything in sight.

<This is it.....!>

At that moment Reygus regretted the fact that it didn't have a heart. It couldn't feel its heart beat faster at watching this splendid sight! Its body was dead, but its soul had pursued this exact moment for a thousand year. At the crescendo of the attack, its soul hunger for more as it burned!

It really was an instant.

The enormous pillar of light had been like the world tree that connected the sky to the earth. When the numerous light swords erupted forth, an unforgettable image was seared into the mind of all who was watching. The tsunami of light hit its target and it created a large vortex.

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

It seared the eyes as the song of destruction rang out. The sound of this transcendent calamity could overpower even a Dragon's Roar. Just the aftereffect of the attack burned the vision of the spectators, and the mental waves moved like rapid currents to burn their minds.

Chapter 144 – Second Coming of a Legend (7)

9

Koo-goo-gooo-gooo.....!

The great destruction lasted only for a brief moment. However, it felt like eternity for everyone on the battlefield.

The shockwave that spread from site of the explosion reached a radius of several hundred meters.

The Sun Lightsaber's after effect was very small compared to its destructive power. Azell had focused the destructive capability into a small region, so the after effect was minimized.

“Ooh-ook. If someone had told me I'm having a bad dream right, I probably would have enthusiastically agreed with that person....”

Kairen tried to regain his breath as he sat down within the waves of dusts swirling around him. If Azell hadn't given him a heads up on what was going to happen, he would have been in big trouble.

No, he had prepared for it yet he had thought he was going to die. He was able to block the shockwave, but his consciousness had almost succumbed to the mental wave even though he had resisted against it with his full power.

Kairen laughed at the absurdity.

“Ha ha ha ha ha. Those ridiculous records were real? They didn't exaggerate the accounts. They actually might have understated it.....”

In the past, he had visited the palace's library for Azell Karzark..... Basically, he went to read historical records about Azell, and he had stated that the absurd accounts actually did a disservice to Azell. When he thought back on what he had said, he wanted to hide in a mousehole from the embarrassment he felt.

“...hmmm. You are still alive?”

Suddenly, he heard Leticia's voice next to him. Kairen answered her.

"Somewhat. It looks as if you had an easier time under the protection of the magician."

"I couldn't afford to protect both of you."

Yuren smirked as he spoke. Before Azell had precipitated the final confrontation, Yuren had quickly surrounded a barrier around Leticia and himself.

Kairen snorted.

"Is that right? Anyways, even the Dragon Demon general Reygus can't survive against such an attack....."

Kairen's face hardened at that point in his words. Leticia and Yuren had an expression of disbelief a beat later. They looked at the scene beyond the dust cloud..

"...it survived after taking that hit?"

On the other side of the large cloud of dust, Reygus was holding up Azell by his throat.

10

The most powerful technique called the Sun Lightsaber could be actualized only using the Sky Splitter.

In the final battle in the Dragon Demon war, Azell had used this move to corner Atein.

In the battle, an endless amount of magic spells were sent towards Azell, and he had been in dire straits. However, Azell had been spying for a chance to attack Atein, and when the opportunity presented itself, Azell put his life on the line to use the Sun Lightsaber technique. It blew away all of Atein's defensive magic, and Atein had been gravely wounded.

There was his Dragon weapon, the quality of his Dragon Demon magic and the vessel that held his magical energy.... Everything

wasn't up to par with his past self right now except for his technical skills.

However, he had fulfilled enough of the three requirements to use the secret technique.

The first requirement was time. Reygus had dared him to use it, so he had enough time to gather the requisite energy.

The second requirement was the Vitan's Chalice. Since his vessel holding the magical energy was small and weak, the amount of magical energy he could gather and hold was smaller than his previous self. However, a vast amount of magical energy could be gathered and concentrated using the Vitan Chalice's Dimensional Distortion.

Thirdly, it was daytime right now. In the past, he had to gather light from the moonlight, starlight and the light that erupted from various parts of the battlefield to complete the technique. If he hadn't had the massive amount of light provided by daylight, it would have been impossible to use it in his current state.

The Sun Lightsaber appeared once again in this era after 220 long years, because all three conditions were met.

However....

<You are really incredible. You are a preposterous human.>

Reygus hadn't cease to exist.

It wasn't as if it hadn't taken damage. Reygus was a mess.

There was no trace of its left arm, and almost half its upper body was blown away. There was no region on the white armor that was unharmed. It was broken and bent. Darkness leaked out like blood from the cracks that had been created.

However, it had endured against the absolute calamity of destruction. It survived against the tsunami of light swords. Now it was raising Azell by the neck.

“A hidden card.... You had one too, you sneaky bastard.”

Azell was panting, and he was a bloody mess. He still possessed all his body parts, but his armor had been turned into junk. There was a deep cut on his stomach, and it was deep enough to see some of his innards through the cut. His left arm was broken, and it was dangling by his side. His right arm wasn't broken, but he couldn't put any strength into it. It was a miracle that he was still conscious.

Reygus laughed.

<I thought it was quite fair. Wasn't it? It was a fight where both of us didn't know who would win.>

“Ha ha ha. I'm at a loss for words.....”

How was Reygus able to endure the Sun Lightsaber?

It was a combination of two answers.

<I'll be truthful. I never thought I would be able to evolve my Dragon Weapon at my advanced age. The last time my Dragon weapon evolved was 400 years before my death.....>

The Sky Splitter wasn't the only Dragon weapon to go through a transformation. The Soul Hammer had evolved beyond the one Azell had known about. In the past, the Soul Hammer had a powerful curse that could destroy minds and souls of its opponents. It also could resonate with the earth to bring out a great destructive ability. However, this new form of hammer allowed Reygus to freely control the power from earth. Moreover, it allowed Reygus to disperse damage through the ground.

Basically, it and its armor had become a castle wall while its feet was connected to the ground.

Moreover....

<If your technique had been perfected, I might have been sent back to the underworld. You are the best, Azell.>

“That kind of compliment... Do you think... I’ll be happy to hear it?”

The Sun Lightsaber wasn’t complete.

In the first place, there were three restrictive prerequisite he would have to fulfill to be able to use it at this point in time. He had been successful in forming and using the technique. However, he had failed at controlling it.

In his prime, Azell would have linked his other Dragon weapons to contain the energy within a specific area. It would have amplified the destructive capability to the extreme. All the after effect that had swept through the radius of several hundred meters would have been directed inwards. The shock wave and the mental wave would have been in his control as it would have destroyed his enemies within this limited region. The pressure created allowed it to exceed a certain level, and even Atein had been shocked by it. An extreme destructive phenomena was created.

However, he had lost control, and a considerable amount of energy had leaked out. It killed the effectiveness of the attack.

It sounded ridiculous, but the recent Sun Lightsaber couldn’t even muster half of its original power.

Zzuh-juhk.....

Suddenly, the sound of a fissure was heard. Then the wrist of the arm holding Azell broke.

Tul-suhk.

Azell rolled across the ground.

He couldn’t move. His body and energy pulse couldn’t function normally.

Still, he got up. He used the beat of his heart to resonate the Rings of Life to create magical energy within his body. He used his psychokinesis to keep his body upright, and the fallen Dragon

sword returned to his hand.

<Both of us are a wreck..>

Reygus laughed.

The winner and loser of the battle was already determined. Azell was showing admirable fighting spirit, but he wasn't in a state where he could fight. Reygus could use his psychokinesis to hit him with the Soul Hammer. No, since its two arms were useless, a single kick could kill Azell.

It was too late for his comrades to help him. They were too far away. By the time they started to move, Reygus would have already ended Azell.

At that moment, its vision darkened.

<Mmm?>

Reygus realized it had entered a Dimensional Distortion field.

<Vitan's Chalice? No, I'm sure I saw it get unsummoned....>

It was taken aback, but it soon realized who was the culprit precipitating this situation.

<Kayalia, what are you doing?>

Kayalia had copied the effects of the Vitan's Chalice. She had used the Dimensional Distortion field. When it raged, Kayalia's white ghostlike form appeared in front of it to speak.

-What do you mean what am I doing? Can't you tell just by looking at it?

<Are you really going to betray me at such a moment? You are too much.>

-It isn't like that.

<Mmm?>

-I'm just being fair. Didn't I save oppa earlier?

<.....>

Reygus groaned at the shameless answer.

It was regretful that it no longer had hands to grip its own head. Reygus spoke.

<My god. Aren't you on our side? Why should you care about what is fair for him? Isn't it a given for you to help me?>

-Wasn't this supposed to be a one on one battle between men?

<Oohk.>

-You were arrogant. You took your time in attacking, and you almost died because of it. You would have met your end if I hadn't saved you.

Reygus was at a loss for words. Kayalia had been the one to block Azell earlier. If it wasn't for her intrusion, it would have died before it could truly showcase its true strength. It had allowed Reygus to see Azell's secret card, so it didn't have any grounds to complain to her.

<Ughh.>

-Moreover, I'm still....

Kayalia had a melancholy expression on her face as she turned away.

11

A quiet descended on the battlefield.

Reygus' presence was gone as if it had been snuffed out. Everyone was taken aback at the unexpected turn of events.

Azell mumbled to himself in disbelief.

“Vitan's Chalice.....?”

It couldn't be. He had unsummoned the Vitan's Chalice.

‘Laura?’

He had seen Laura use Dimensional Distortion to defeat Dikal. Of course, this was the only possibility that sounded plausible to him. However, he was wrong. He could see a desperate expression on Laura's face.

‘So who.....’

-You remain unchanged.

Suddenly, a white cloth fluttered in front of his eyes. Then a faint insubstantial figure could be seen in his vision.

‘Who is she?’

Azell thought he had heard that voice from somewhere before. He was about to raise his head when a warm touch could be felt on his forehead.

-It has been a long time since we've met. I'm sorry I can't give you a proper greeting. When I see you next, my heart will have come to a decision. I'll have decided either way by then.

At the end of her words, Azell lost consciousness. Kairen caught Azell's falling body. Kairen faced forward as he asked a question.

“Who are you?”

Kayalia chose to reveal herself, so Kairen could see her.

If one used human standards, she looked to be a 14 or 15 year old girl. She was a Dragon Majin girl with blonde hair flowing through the air. There was a gray horn protruding from between her hair, and her ears were long. She possessed a slate-grey Dragon Magic stone on the back of her hand which was the same color as her eyes.

The weirdest part about her was the fact that she didn't possess a body. It wasn't an illusion sent by a magician. It looked like a ghost.

The problem was the fact that she was emitting Dragon Demon magic.

Kayalia let out a melancholy smile as she spoke.

-I was once the enemy of humans.

“Are you part of the Dragon Demon King’s army?”

Kairen’s wariness increased. He didn’t know what she was, but his instinct was giving him a warning. It was telling him that she was a very dangerous being.

However, Kayalia shook her head from side to side.

-At one time, I considered him to be my savior. That should be enough.

“What do you mean?”

-I’m not going to tell you. I’m leaving now. Please don’t waste the opportunity I have provided.

“...mmm.”

Kairen’s expression hardened, and Kayalia disappeared in mid-air as if she had melted away. Laura asked with a worried expression on her face.

“What about Azell?”

“Fortunately, it isn’t life-threatening.”

“...even in such a state?”

Leticia was taken aback. Azell had taken grievous wounds. It wouldn’t have shocked her if he died at any moment. However, there was a strangely peaceful expression on the face of the unconscious Azell.

“I also have a hard time believing it, but it is true. First, let’s get out of here then we can heal him. I don’t know the identity of that ghost woman, but as unbelievable as it may sound, she saved Azell. The reinforcement from the Plain of Darkness will be here soon.”

Everyone knew what Kairen was talking about.

The real adversity would begin right now. They had won the

battle, but the party was in rough shape. Moreover, they didn't know how, but the Demon King worshippers had a way of tracking them.

The party left behind numerous questions as they exited the battlefield. They started running towards east.

12

Reygus was released from Kayalia's Dimensional Distortion field after 30 minutes. During that time, its Dragon Demon magic had dissipated, and its armor had returned to its black color. Reygus grumbled as it observed its half-recovered armor.

<I let go of a fish I had almost caught.>

“Doesn't all your work turn out that way?”

As if he had been waiting for this moment, a man walked towards Reygus as he spoke. Reygus replied when it saw him.

<Hmm. You are here? It seems she let me go, because she saw you.>

“She probably did. The fact that she rarely shows herself in front of me might mean that she doesn't really want to see me.”

<Unlike me, you aren't that cute.>

“Mmm?”

<She said I'm cute.>

“...whether it's the past or now, she is someone that is hard to understand.”

<By the way, you showed up after the fight.... Your ass has gotten really heavy.>

“I'm not like you. I'm just an old man that everyone has forgotten about. Since I've hidden myself for such a long time, numerous annoying problems have cropped up when I decided to move.”

<Shouldn't you have taken care of all of that beforehand?>

“Diligence and a busy life is the domain of the young ones. I'm too old to live a diligent and busy life.”

<Your tongue still remains slippery. It is incongruous with how you look.>

“If we are going by appearance, there is no one that looks as boorish as you. So how can you say such words to me?”

The man cackled. The conversation didn't have much substance behind it, but it revived the old feelings they had felt long ago.

Suddenly, the man turned away from Reygus to walk towards a certain direction. There were only two survivors from the earlier battle. One of the Dragon Majin was breathing raggedly as he received treatment.

Reygus followed behind the man as it spoke.

<I guess they managed to survive.>

“...they are underlings under your command. You shouldn't speak like that.”

<That's true, but I was imprisoned by Kayalia. Aside from Azell's party, the Guardian Shadows are surprisingly good at avoiding detection.>

“He probably had a hand in this.”

<Ah, you are probably right. However, this isn't like him. He wouldn't kill all the dying enemies. It isn't in his nature.>

The man sighed at Reygus' words. Then he spoke to the Dragon Majin who had barely regained his consciousness.

“Are you well enough to give your report?”

The Dragon Majin was puzzled by the man's words. This was the first time he had seen this man. However, his confusion suddenly turned into shock. This being was known to everyone who resided

in the Plain of Darkness.

“You are.....!”

Chapter 145 - Heaven and Hell (1)

1

Clouds of war were gathering at various locations on the continent.

The seven kingdoms had originated when an empire broke up, so they weren't on best of terms. There was always tension along the border.

Still, no large war had been waged after the initial period of confusion. There had only been small border skirmishes.

However, the Bijes kingdom and the Iellos kingdom had gathered their armies along the border, and it felt as if a single twitch could set off each side.... Similar situations were occurring in various locations around the continent.

The Yudusk kingdom and the Garan kingdom were descended from the ancient royal line, so there was bad blood between them regarding the legitimacy of their lines. In the early period of chaos, those two kingdoms fought the fiercest battles.

This was why the border between the two were very heated. However, the members of the Guardian Shadows worked in the political scene for three years to negotiate a cease-fire. However, the prince who was sent as an emissary was assassinated, so the fire of war was stoked..

The Dailan kingdom's king was poisoned with his successor not named. There were signs of civil war erupting in that kingdom.

The Rulain kingdom and the Ralos kingdom had several recent incidents where the tension along the border between the two countries were at an all time high.

In such an atmosphere, Dragon Demon Princess Arrieta was dispatched when the Western Border Guards requested reinforcement.

‘The Grand Alliance of Darkness is being revived.’

...it was an urgent news that had arrived from the Western Border Guards.

A mutated Orc named Dakan had formed the Grand Alliance of Darkness around 30 years ago. It was a similar situation right now where a massive number of demonic creatures were attacking the Western Border Guards. They were somehow able to hold them off inside the fortress, but it said in the missive that they would fall if reinforcements weren't provided soon. The Western Border Guards resided in a fortress outfitted specifically able to hold off a force that was of same size as the Grand Alliance of Darkness. However, a variable they had never accounted for had appeared.

It was a Dragon.

For some reason, the Water Dragon who lived in a lake deep with the forest had attacked them. After a fierce battle, they were able to repel the Dragon. However, the damage to the fortress had been heavy, and the Western Border Guards had taken heavy casualties.

This was when a large horde of demonic beasts had attacked them.

“Is that the bastard?”

Arietta was on top of the fortress' wall as she observed the enemy force.

The throne had quickly dispatched 200 troops with her leading them. She was also given command of reinforcements sent from other regions. She had arrived at the Western Border Fortress with over 1,000 men.

Moreover, this was only the vanguard. The throne was gathering more troops even at that moment. However, when the reinforcement had arrived, the castle wall was in horrible shape. It would be a tall task to be able to ward off 10,000 demonic beasts.

“It is big enough to make me doubt if it really is an orc.”

Giles was next to Arrieta. He had already risen in rank, and he was firmly entrenched in his position as her lieutenant.

He spoke.

“It is as Azell had said before.”

“They have a way to mobilize a dragon, and all these schemes are being hatched by the Dragon Demon King worshippers.....”

Arrieta was dumbfounded.

The cloud of war hanging over the continent was all manufactured by the Plain of Darkness.

Arrieta and Giles was aware of this truth. As they were taught techniques under the tutelage of Azell and Kairen, they had learned a lot about the Dragon Demon king worshippers from them.

Azell spoke.

‘They have superb bodies, and their intelligence is on par with humans. They have the charisma to make other demonic beasts obey them. Then there are the ones with enough magical energy to be on par with Dragon Majins. These types of Orcs were used quite often in the Dragon Demon war. It was surmised that the secret to making them was with Aunsaurus....

Azell had told Laura about the mutated Orcs. One had been used to lure Seigar into the County of Baldan.

However, when she arrived at this location, she found that Falkan possessed more power than the previous mutated orc named Dakan

It showed martial skills that could easily break through the knights of the Western Border patrol, and it didn’t end there.....

Shwee... Kwah-kwahng!

A sound of an explosion rang out from below as the walls shook.

It was enough force to be mistaken for a high rank magician's spell. However, the impact had surprisingly come from a single arrow.

"A mere Orc is a magical archer? I'm so surprised that I don't know what to say."

Arrieta expressed her amazement.

Surprisingly, Faikan was shooting magic arrows. It was infused with magical energy that was on par with that of a Dragon Majin. It was using an enormous long bow that couldn't be used by humans, and it had great accuracy with the weapon. It also had destructive capability on par with a high rank magician.

It had already killed double digits in troops with its sniping. The Orc was a nightmare-like existence to the Western Border Guards.

Shweee... Puh-uhng!

Another arrow flew towards them.

However, it wasn't able to reach the fortress wall this time around. It exploded in midair. Arrieta had used her technique to shoot down the incoming arrow from afar.

The light in Faikan's eyes changed. Instead of aiming for Arrieta, it continuously shot towards various locations along the wall.

Puh-uhng! Pah-pahng! Pah-ah-ahng!

It was useless. All of the attacks except the first arrow was intercepted.

It was as if Arietta was reading Faikan's mind. When it found a new target to shoot, she used Instantaneous Movement to appear at the target. She used her Dragon Arts to intercept them. Moreover.....

"Oh Evil Darkness, Rend Apart!"

She shouted the words of power as a white light erupted from the sword she had stabbed into the empty air. Faikan threw away its

bow in shock as it raised its sword.

Kwahhhhhh!

Surprisingly, her attack had reached a target that was 100 meters away.

This was something Arietta hadn't been able to do before. However, when she learned the forgotten techniques from Azell, her inner reservoir of qi had drastically increased.

"As expected, I didn't expect it to stay still."

Arrieta mumbled to herself as she let out a cold laugh.

"Koo-uh! You dare defy me, little bitch!"

Faikan got on the body of an Ogre that was stationed below the fortress wall. When given the command by the orc, the Ogre grabbed and threw the Orc towards the top of the fortress wall.

It was a tactic that was feasible, because the Ogre possessed great size and strength. However, Arrieta wasn't taken unawares by the move.

Cha-ahng!

Faikan's enormous sword clashed against Arrieta's pure white sword. Faikan was shocked. It had used the momentum of its flight to unleash a powerful sword strike, but Arrieta easily deflected it.

It wasn't because Arrieta was strong. When their swords touched, an explosive and repulsive force was created using Dragon Demon magic, and Faikan was flung away.

"You are better than expected."

Faikan smoothly neutralized the repulsive force to land on top of the castle wall. Arrieta broke out in cold sweat when she saw this.

'I cannot believe how much skill this Orc has. My previous self would have a hard time facing it.'

She was able to extrapolate that fact from just a single exchange.

Faikan possessed martial prowess that exceeded her previous self.

Arrieta spoke.

“Orc, you will hate yourself for overestimating your own ability. I’ll end the 2nd Grand Alliance of Darkness here.”

“Hmmp! A weak bitch like you should know your place before you speak such words! I’ll sever your head right now, and I’ll open the gates to this fortress!”

Faikan spoke eloquently in the human tongue as it once again attacked Arrieta.

This was how she confronted the 2nd Grand Alliance of Darkness, and the battle at the Western Border Fortress intensified.

2

After running away from Reygus, Azell’s party headed eastward.

Azell had lost to Reygus, but the enemy force had been decimated. However, the problem was the fact that the enemy’s reinforcement was coming. When Reygus joined with the reinforcement, it was obvious that they would start tracking down Azell’s party.

However, the party couldn’t move as quickly as they would have liked even in such a desperate situation.

They had fought a fierce battle, so the party was tired and wounded. Moreover, Azell was hovering between life and death right now. It restricted their mobility.

In the end, the party had moved for an hour before they decided to rest and apply first aid.

Yuren had used magic to move Azell in an attempt to reduce any turbulence. He carefully placed Azell on the floor.

“Well, now.....”

Yuren turned to look at Laura.

“I’ll go first. You should mediate.”

“All right.”

Laura nodded her head.

They were quite fortunate in the fact that there were two high rank black magicians within their party. Since there were no healers inside the party, no one could heal wounds aside from Yuren and Laura.

“You should use this potion. I only have two bottles left.”

Kairen took out healing potions from within his armor, and he hand them over to Yuren. Originally, he had several more bottles, but they broke during battle.

Yuren asked him a question.

“Everyone is injured. Shouldn’t you be using it?”

“It is best to use it on the person with the most serious wounds.”

“That’s true, but....”

“Use it.”

Kairen was firm with his words, then he approached Leticia.

“We’ll take turns resting. You should meditate first.”

“I’ll do so.”

Leticia acquiesced to his words. It was because her injuries were more serious than his.

Yuren scratched his head as he unstoppered the potion bottle. He started pouring the liquid into Azell’s wounds.

“Ooh-ook.....”

Azell groaned in his unconscious state. The healing potion disinfected his wounds, so it hurt when it was applied.

However, he wasn’t showing any signs of waking up. Yuren took

a deep breaths as he looked carefully over Azell's wounds.

“Let's see.....”

Yuren put one hand against a large tree, and he place his other hand on top of Azell's chest. Soon, an ominous energy arose from Yuren as rapid change occurred to the tree.

Pa-sah-sahk....

The tree, which was as twice as thick and thrice as tall as Yuren, was rapidly drying up. The thick leaves dried up as it fell away, and the branches became emaciated.

Yuren's black magic was stealing life energy from the tree.

Yuren used some of the energy on his body, then he poured the rest into Azell.

He was a black magician, so he didn't have subtle techniques like the healers. However, he could steal life energy to increase the survivability of one's body, and it could imbue unnaturally fast regenerative ability. That was all he could do.

However, this kind of healing skill needed extreme caution. It was less effective to use it on someone else, and the risk also increased. If Yuren transferred too much power, Azell's body might break down instead of healing.

“As expected... The the healing effect using the life energy of a tree is quite meager.”

“Should I go catch something?”

“If you leave your post, it'll be hard for us to fight off an ambush from our enemies. Let's ask them to do it.”

Yuren swept his hand towards the surrounding as he pointed out the hazy shapes.

Chapter 146 - Heaven and Hell (2)

They were the Guardian Shadows. Over 50 of them were following along as if they were guarding Azell. As time passed, the number grew.

Kairen had a peculiar expression on his face.

“Is it possible for us to communicate with them?”

“It seems we have a hard time understanding them, but they understand us pretty well.”

“Mmm. I think you are right.”

“Also, we aren’t really asking them to do anything difficult.”

When Yuren approached them, all the Guardian Shadows turned to look at him. They were ghost-like figures, and they all stared at him at the exact same moment. It was eerie. Yuren gulped as he spoke.

“I have a request. I don’t care what kind, but could you guys capture some of the animals nearby? They have to be brought back alive.....”

「We can do it.....」

「Beasts.....」

「We hunt.....」

About half of the 50 Guardian Shadows dispersed into the forest.

In short order, Yuren had a pile of animals in front of him. Either bones were broken or magic was used to immobilize the animals.

“This is enough. You should use this too, Laura. I’ll continue Azell’s treatment for now.”

“Understood.”

Unlike Yuren, Laura’s magical energy and stamina had been exhausted.

It was more effective to steal life energy rather than meditate.

Yuren continued his treatment as he asked Kairen a question.

“What should we do now?”

Since Azell had lost his consciousness, it was up to Kairen to lead the party.

Kairen spoke.

“I thought about taking us to the nearest city to avoid them..... However, I decided against it.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know about the others, but I don't think Reygus will give up even if we go into a city. If we go into a city to use the civilians as shields, what happens if they do decide to attack....”

A catastrophe would occur. If Reygus went wild at the center of a city, there would be several thousand civilian casualties.

Yuren spoke.

“However, it’ll be hard for us to continue running away like this.”

“Still, our situation won’t improve by going into a city.”

“I guess you are right. Even if they don’t attack us, we’ll become surrounded.”

“For now, we have to rely on them.”

The number of Guardian Shadows were increasing. It was as if all the Guardian Shadows on the continent was gathering here. If the Guardian Shadows could hold back the enemies, it wouldn’t be too difficult for the party to run away.

Suddenly, Kairen asked them a question.

“You guys are all gathering here... As expected, Azell is the man from the prophecy?”

「Prophecy.....」

「The person from the prophecy.....」

「Hero.....」

「We put our trust.....」

「The person that made our existence possible.....」

The Guardian Shadows started to speak from all sides.

Kairen confirmed it when he heard their words.

Azell was the prophesied being.

‘He is human yet he possesses Dragon Demon magic. He will be the vessel for a great power, and he will attain our greatest wish.’

The being that created the Guardian Shadows had left behind this prophecy to the Guardians of the Prophecy. The person mentioned would bring total destruction to the Dragon Demon king worshippers, and he would end this fight.

At the same time, he had a question.

“What do you mean by ‘the person that made our existence possible’?”

「He started.....」

「He was the beginning.....」

「He connects the beginning and the end.....」

“.....”

As expected, it was hard to communicate with them. Kairen’s face hardened from annoyance.

“Wait a moment. The founder of the Guardian Shadow was....”

When Azell had explained his own identity, he had spoke about this very topic.

“His best friend, Archmage Carlos, devoted himself to completing an incredible magic. What if this magic was used to put

Azell in a deep sleep where his aging process was suspended? What if he was placed in a location far away from prying eyes? What if he slept like a Dragon through the long years in a place where humans didn't dare travel?'

At the time, he had thought Azell was talking nonsense. However, he now realized that Azell had confessed the truth to him.

It seemed the truth had been buried, and it had been lost to the world. Who was the last person to know of Azell's whereabouts? Who could have made a prophecy that pointed to Azell as the final hope? What magician was audacious enough to make ludicrous beings such as the Guardian Shadows?

Kairen could only think of one such person.

"Archmage Carlos Rizester....."

There might have been others that may have known where Azell had been sleeping.

However, when one entered the qualifier that this person had to be a caliber of a magician able to create the Guardian Shadows, the only one that came to mind was Carlos.

Yuren spoke.

"Didn't Reygus ask about the whereabouts of Carlos?"

"Since Azell is Azell Karzark, it wouldn't be strange if Carlos Rizester was still alive somewhere. It really is hard to believe, but the proof is right in front of us."

"The strongest pair from the Dragon Demon war will re-emerge into the current era. It really does sound like a joke."

"It is a story that comes up quite often between knights and magicians."

"What?"

"It is theorized that the records from the Dragon Demon war was

exaggerated. Still, many people try to be objective when discussing this subject. The magicians and knights talk about how they would have fared against the figures from the Dragon Demon war..... This was why I've heard a lot of those talks between men. They talked for days comparing who was stronger.”

Kairen let out a bitter laugh.

He felt the truth in his bones when he saw the fight between Azell and Reygus. He knew now that the records from the Dragon Demon war wasn't exaggerated. The truth was written into the record as is.

‘However, if Carlos had created the Guardian Shadows, there are still many unanswered questions....’

The Guardian Shadows were a secret organization, and their existence weren't known to the world. So why didn't Carlos reveal his identity to Azell and the Guardian Shadows? Why did he only leave behind such a vague prophecy?

Moreover, even if he had the capability to create such beings, Kairen couldn't discern the exact purpose behind creating the Guardian Shadows.

If Kairen was in Carlos' shoes, he would have done it differently. After faking his death from the world, wouldn't it have been better to use his influence from the background to create an organization that could rival the Dragon Demon king worshippers?

Carlos had hidden his existence from the Guardian Shadows, and the Guardian Shadows started their activities only after the Great Darkness. Kairen wonder why Carlos hadn't opposed the Dragon Demon King worshippers before the Great Darkness when they had trampled over the human society. What situation prevented him from doing so?

Suddenly, Yuren spoke.

“However, we can't say for sure that this was done by Carlos.”

“Why?”

“The hints gathered here makes it easy to point the finger towards Carlos. However, there are many unanswered questions. Wouldn't it be likely be the work of a descendant of Carlos that had been hidden from history? I'm also one of the unknown descendant of Carlos.”

“You say you are Carlos' descendant. It seems you have no doubts to the veracity of that claim.”

“Azell did say I looked like Carlos.”

“Still, it isn't definite proof that you are a descendant of Carlos. Of course, there is also no reason not to believe your claim.”

“Jeez. You are casting doubt on the identity of your comrade.”

“Since we have the same goal, I'll honor the fact that we are comrades. However, your identity is a bit suspect.... First, your guide is very suspicious. Don't we have to figure out his identity first?”

“Sadly, I can't refute that point..... Anyways, I recently came up with a fun theory about the identity of the guide.”

“What theory?”

“It could be Sage Baion.....”

“Baion? Why are you suddenly bringing him into this?”

Kairen furrowed his brows. He had suffered through the Great Darkness, so of course, he was sensitive about that name.

Yuren was about to reply when it occurred.

“Ooh-ook.....”

Azell moaned as he opened his eyes.

Yuren had a look of pleasure on his face.

“Azell!”

“.....”

“Are you awake? Can you hear me?”

Yuren asked the questions. Azell spoke in a labored manner.

“Loud....”

“Huh?”

“Stop speaking so loudly..... My head...is ringing.....”

“Ah. I’m sorry. I was just so surprised.”

Yuren let out a bitter laugh.

Azell let out a sigh then he opened his mouth. However, his mouth moved without emitting a sound, so Azell decided to communicate using Whispering.

-Since it is too difficult to speak, I’ll communicate through this technique.

“That might be fore the best.”

-Someone filled by body with turbid life energy. Did you do it, Yuren?

“It was the only way we could treat you.”

-It seems we didn’t have the luxury to go to a healer. I am worried about the side effect.... I guess it is better than dying from lack of treatment.

As he spoke those words, he started actively using the life energy of the beasts injected into his body by Yuren. When he was unconscious, he had passively received the life energy. Now he was aware of the status of his body, so he could focus the life energy towards the locations that needed it the most.

Yuren was surprised.

“It seems something accelerated the process?”

-It is thanks to the power of the Dragon.

“What do you mean?”

-I've taken the power of the Dragons using the Dragon Slayer's Ritual, but I hadn't been able to digest it all yet. In the process of healing, the power is now permeating into my body. It is a huge waste of power, but it can't be helped.

Azell furrowed his brows. If he used the power of the Dragon for recovery, there was a downside. He had originally planned on using the power to strengthen his body. He had planned on using it to turn his magical energy further into Dragon Demon magic. That power was now being diverted. Still, this was the best way forward right now.

His body was becoming noticeably better as his recovery speed increased.

The members of the party wondered if Azell could recover from such an injury. Even if he was able to get better, it was assumed that Azell would suffer from the aftereffects. His wounds were that serious. His bones, muscles, organs and nerves.....

Blood flow had been stemmed through force, but now his blood circulation was slowly normalizing. The damaged tissues were regaining their original forms.

The process was quite slow. His recovery speed was much faster than a normal person, but he wasn't able to be instantly cured from a serious injury.

-Please explain our current situation.

“It has been about an hour since we've exited the battlefield.”

-Only that much time had passed?

Azell was surprised. He had completely lost consciousness, so he had no idea how much time had passed.

Yuren was terse as he explained the current situation. He also told Azell about the Guardian Shadows.

“...this was why we were treating you while we took a break. Moreover, we can't dally here much longer.”

-I see. I don't know what method they are using, but they are able to track us....

“If their tracking method is still viable, they can track us down at any moment. If they do track us down, we have to rely on the Guardian Shadows. We have no choice but to keep running away.”

-The path to the Albatan forest will be quite treacherous.

“It seems you still plan on going there. Maybe, that location might be the safest place for us....”

Chapter 147 - Heaven and Hell (3)

The Albatan forest was a demonic land located at the eastern end of the continent. The members of the Plain of Darkness didn't dare intrude on this location thanks to the beings that ruled over the forest. When high caliber troops like Niberis and Duran was sent out to find the whereabouts of Saibein, they avoided all confrontations within the forest. Instead, they had run away at first sign of danger. They had to be very cautious in their search.

This had been the case during and before the Dragon Demon war. It was a demonic land that was left over from the olden days.....

"Can you guarantee that the wise Dragon Albatan won't be hostile towards us?"

-I can't.

"Wait a moment. You can't?"

-However, I can't think of another place to go to. Especially now...

"Especially now?"

-The Demon King Balserk spoke about it. He said the answer is with Albatan.

"What?"

Yuren became surprised. Azell spoke.

-My curiosity is mounting as to who the guide really is. He is reading my moves as if he had seen my future. How could he arrange all of this without it?

"Mmmm....."

-If there were other options available to me, I might have rejected what he had arranged for me. These subtle arrangements fit too well with my situation. It makes me wonder if I'm drinking from a poisoned well.

“You are saying we have no other options?”

-The cards we hold is limited. If we had been successful in completely escaping the clutches of our enemies then maybe.....

“It’s fine. If we are going to die anyways, I’d rather not to be killed by the Dragon Demon king worshippers. When we have time, I’ll take a nap. Maybe, the guide will give us a decent plan.”

Azell and Kairen was taken aback by his words, so they stared at Yuren. Kairen spoke.

“I know you trust the guide, but.... Is it ok to put all your eggs in one basket by blindly trusting the guide?”

“I’ve always lived liked this. Maybe, I’m the one that should be called a fanatic.”

Azell and Kairen was at a loss for words. The more they saw this side of Yuren it became harder for them to understand him.

Yuren queried.

“What was the truth that Balserk wanted to impart on us?”

-He wanted to tell us about the identity of the Demon race.

“Mmm?”

Azell told the two puzzled men about the last conversation he shared with Balserk.

3

Balserk spoke.

<When hearing a long story, don’t humans like to hear a summary that is three lines or less beforehand? Since I like buying the goodwill of my audience, I’ll tell you the summary first.>

“You are kind. So is it three lines?”

<Unfortunately, I’m not talented enough to put the summary into the form of a three line stanza..... I’ll resolve it with a single line. Demons are humans.>

“What?”

Azell became surprised at Balserk’s words.

Demons had deep ill will towards humans, and they led humans to destruction by baiting them with knowledge. How could beings that are so engrossed in destroying humans be humans themselves?

Balserk cackled.

<Are you surprised?>

“...honestly, I am surprised. However, it isn’t as if it is unbelievable.”

<Ho-oh. Why?>

“You said they were humans.”

<Mmm?>

“The beings that hate humans the most are humans. If you frame it like that, it seems obvious.”

The ones that had the deepest understanding of humans were other humans. The ones that were capable of hating humans the most was also humans.

Azell didn’t know any existence that hated humans more than other humans. Hatred and ill will towards other humans seemed like a natural phenomena.

Balserk spoke.

<Ah ah. It is quite unfortunate.>

“What are you referring to?”

<I regret the fact that I don’t have much time left to share my story with you. The act of sharing a story with someone is a very sweet thing. It is an opportunity where we can get to know about each other. If it was up to me, I want to extend this conversation for a thousand or ten thousand years to fill this emptiness..... My

wish is to enjoy my life in that fashion.>

He had been in absolute isolation, and he had been pining for his own destruction. The Demon King spoke with a sad voice..

Azell didn't give a reply. Balserk looked at him for a brief moment before he continued to speak..

<Yes, it is as you've said. Humans hate humans the most. In this world, the ones to kill the most humans isn't wild beasts, natural disasters or even plagues.... If one thought about humans as a possibility, it is a logical conclusion.>

The Demon race yearned for human, yet they hated humans at the same time. If the Demon race were once humans, it really was an obvious conclusion.

<There are several myths that points to this truth. For example, the birth of the Dragon Demon race...>

They were the product between Dragons and the Demon race. Dragon Demons were a high rank species that was the last amongst the races to walk on the surface of this world.

They were a a completely different species, yet they held resemblance to humans. On top of that fact, they were able to procreate with humans. The Dragon Majins were the product of such unions.

<Dragon Slayer's Ritual.>

In nature, the Dragons were tyrants that were born with massive amounts of energy. Humans were the weakest if one took away their wisdom and weapons. It was an odd match.

<Legend of Babel.>

The way one thinks differed depending on where one lived. Every humans are the same at a fundamental level, yet humans from different regions had different languages.

This led to magicians wanting to stop all tragedies that stemmed

from a breakdown in communications. They consolidated the language of the human race into one.

<There are several other myths..... However, these are the classic examples.>

“Are you trying to say the existence of the Demon race should be included as one of them?”

<That’s right.>

Balserk gave an affirmation.

<I don’t know how or when humans came to walk on the surface of this world. However, I do know that Demon race originated from the human race.>

“There is something I am curious about.....”

Azell asked a question.

“Where do the Demon race get their knowledge? How can you be so sure that you are right?”

<Again, it all originates from humans.>

“What?”

<The Demon race cannot exist in this world. I don’t know who started calling us Demons, but it was an apt nickname. We live outside of the human world.... It is a place filled with emptiness. In other words, it is hell.>

“Do you mean hell really exists?”

<The place I am talking about is a little bit different from the hell discussed within the temples of this world. Let me put aside the explanation about hell for now. There are two qualities that are lacking from Demons that humans possess. >

“What is it?”

<It is sleep and forgetfulness.>

“Hmm.....”

<We do not fall asleep, and we never forget. We are always observing the world. When I say the Demons ‘observe’, you should think of it as..... Yes, it is a bit different than looking at someone from afar.>

“What do you mean by that?”

<When the Demon race observes a human, it is a similar experience as reading a novel. Basically, half of it is from an omniscient viewpoint.>

“Basically, you are saying it includes the thoughts within a humans head?”

<It isn’t just thoughts. We are even able to see the causal relationship. It isn’t as if we can pick and choose everything we want to see. However, this means we are able to gain a variety of knowledge.>

If a human discovers something, does the knowledge get transferred to everyone?

No.

Does an achievement attained by someone benefit all humans?

No.

<Many information gets lost, but if one is lucky, the knowledge may get passed on to another human. The knowledge of the Demon race is based on personal observation. Moreover....>

Balserk raised a finger, and he focused Azell’s gaze on it.

<The only condition needed for a human to become a Demon is hate.>

“Humans that possess hate becomes a Demon?”

<If we are to summarize it, your statement is correct.>

“...I’m just trying to confirm something. Death is part of the process in becoming a Demon?”

<Of course. You are correct.>

“So everyone that dies with hate in their heart becomes a Demon?”

<That isn't the case. If one wants to become a demon, one has to fulfill two prerequisites..>

It didn't matter how, but one had to hate humanity after being murdered by a stranger.

Moreover, the hate had to be so enormous that the hate doesn't become limited to a single person. The person has to hate everything that was made by humans in this world.

<The first Demon was the very first human to be murdered by another human. I've met him before.>

“You've met him? How?”

<The magician that put me in this state made me confront him. It was an interesting experience.>

“The very first human to be murdered by another.... It really does sound like a myth.”

<Everything has a first. The being that imprisoned me was trying to find the origin of humans through this Demon. I'm not sure if he gained the answer he wanted.>

“Hmmm.....”

<I'm not sure if there are more conditions, but that is all I've discovered. The one to imprison me here found out the reason behind the birth of the Demon race. At the same time, he surmised that something went wrong when humans appeared on this world.>

“Something went awry? Do you mean this world? Or are you talking about humans?”

<Both. I'm not entirely sure what the problem was. However. From the perspective of a demon, humans were changed into

Demons, and they were thrown into hell. It is a consensus amongst us that this is proof that something is wrong with this world. As a human, you probably see the Demons as evil existence. However, I told you about the prerequisite needed to become a Demon. Can't you see that process is unfair?>

“The ones that have hate in their heart after being murdered is thrown into hell. The temple tells us that we reap what we sow. It seems that is far from the truth.”

<It means morality has nothing to do with hell, Demons and humans. One doesn't become a demon, because one was evil or one had committed a wrong. It is akin to a human contracting a incurable disease. We were just unlucky in becoming Demons and being sent to hell..... This world is horrifying cruel, and there is something wrong with it.>

“Do you want sympathy from me?”

<It would be great if you could give me some.>

“.....”

<If you look at me like that, I'll be wounded. All right. I'll talk more about hell.>

Balserk let out a self-deprecating smile.

<The Demon race can watch the world strictly as outsiders. We are similar to humans.... To be precise, we used to be humans, and our minds had been corrupted. We couldn't contact anyone in the outside world, so we could share our plight with anyone. Do you realize how horrifying that is?>

“That is hell?”

<That's right. The only reason why we know know we are separate beings inside that place is the fact that we still have self-awareness. However....>

They knew where the world was, yet they couldn't approach it.

Even as they brushed by it, they couldn't reach the world.

<There is no conflict in that place. There is no discrimination. No one suffers from hunger or sickness. Since we've escaped the circle of life, we do not grow old. Do you know what some call such a world?>

“It is... paradise.”

<That is correct. It is a world everyone yearned for. It was an ideal world that everyone had dreamed about.>

They were able to perceive the existence of other beings, yet they were thrown into a world where they couldn't vent their feelings. Moreover, it didn't matter if one wanted to or not. One was able to observe the world that they had once existed in.

This world had happiness within it.

There was anger.

There was sadness.

There was joy.

<We could see it.>

They could only see it.

No matter how enticing it was they couldn't possess it.

No matter how sad it was they couldn't save them.

Moreover, they couldn't share what they had seen and felt with others.

<When the ability to communicate is taken away, the problems that had to be gotten rid of to create a utopia is solved. However, it is also a hell where one's soul is infringed on.>

“.....”

Chapter 148 - Heaven and Hell (4)

<We are the offspring of evil. We were born from the malice of humans. We were tossed into hell. The malice within hell kept growing without bounds.... In the end, we became the existences called the Demons.>

They couldn't sleep, and they couldn't forget. The Demon race was in constant torment as their malice grew.

They hated humans.

Humans were members of a world where they could communicate with each other. The Demons were so jealous of them that it was unbearable.

<We were in such a state when.... A life line in the form of black magicians appeared.>

At some point in history, the black magicians discovered the existence of the Demon race.

It was truly a chance discovery. For some unknown reason, there were places where the barrier between the world and hell was blurred. The black magicians were able to perceive them at these locations, so they started finding ways to bring forth the Demons into this world.

<We were seen as an intelligence of unknown origin. We occupied a different world as theirs, so the black magicians couldn't leave this discovery alone.>

It took a very long time before the first Demon was summoned back into the world. It couldn't be achieved in a single lifetime. It took over 400 years worth of research and experimentation. The results of these research were passed down, and the summoning technique was perfected.

<When we were summoned through black magic.... The Demons gained something they desired the most.>

It was ‘communication’.

<Then we found out something.>

By communicating with the humans, they could gain the souls of humans by leading them to their own destruction.

When they gained the soul, it was possible for them to participate in a world that they could only observe previously.

<This was how we became the ‘evil Demons’. Do you get why the Demon race had no choice but to act malicious towards humans?>

“.....”

Azell was at a loss for words.

If it was as Balserk had said....

“Something is awry.”

He couldn’t pinpoint what went wrong.

However, the existence of the Demon race itself seemed wrong.

The rules of the world had birthed the Demon race, and there was a fundamental defect in those rules!

Azell asked the question.

“Why are you telling me this? I’m not a scholar or a magician. Even if you tell me that there is a fundamental defect to the rules of this world, I don’t think I will dedicate my life to fixing it.”

Azell was sincere in asking his question.

Balserk’s story was a mythological truth. However, the story didn’t really move Azell.

In the first place, the world was full of unfairness.

Each human were born with different fate. There were those that were born strong, and there were those that were born weak. There were those that were born into wealth, and there were those that were born into poverty. There were children that had

guardians from birth, and there were children that were abandoned at birth.

The truth of the Demon race was just one of the many unfairness in this world, so it didn't really tug at his heart strings.

“The world has always been a fucked up place. That is why everyone is trying to make this place better. We are fighting ad nauseum to create a place where everyone can live alongside together.”

What was worse, the Dragon Demon war wasn't fought with such intention in mind.

Each person's thoughts on what was a 'good world' differed.

Azell fought and hated the members of the Dragon Demon king's army, but.....

He was cognizant of the fact that they were also fight for their own version of a 'good world'.

“Why are you telling me these truths?”

<I don't know.>

“.....”

<I was given an order to tell you this story. I was told I would be freed from this torment that was worse than hell if I followed his order. That is why I'm just doing what I am told.>

“...I see.”

<May I tell you my last story?>

“Since I'm running out of time, you should do so.”

<I'm thankful that I was able to speak to you like this. It had been such a painful experience that I wanted everything to end, but..... My last act will be a conversation with someone. It is a really good thing, but unfortunately, we have to end it here.>

Balserk hesitated.

This was the moment he had been dreaming about. He dreamed about being freed from the pain worse than hell and the emptiness..... However, the simple act of conversing with someone made him have a lingering attachment.

It was as if he was mocking himself for being tormented by all of this. He threw out his last words.

<The wise Dragon will inform you of the path you will have to take.>

When his words ended, the energy maintaining Balserk's Undead form dissipated. There was only his skeleton left. It crumpled like a poorly constructed toy.

Azell mumbled to himself as he watched the bones noisily fall to the floor.

“...who's trying to plan out my fate?”

4

The party continued to head east.

Somehow, they had to make it through the Iellos kingdom to reach demonic land located in the east. They had to go to the Albatan Forest. The truth about the Demon race was revealed through Balserk, and this unknown being left a message for him. The need to follow up on the lead had grown.

However, the problem was the enemies tracking them.

It was unknown as to what method they were using, but the Dragon Demon king worshippers were able to track down the party's location. The party had started their escape only a day ago, yet the hands of their enemies stretched out towards them.

The first to realize the ambush was Kairen.

Azell was sleeping like the dead as he received Yuren's ministrations.

Azell was still in very bad shape, and it was impossible for them

to transport him through the air for an extended amount of time. They had to stop intermittently to rest and heal Azell.

When Kairen sensed someone watching them, he spoke.

“...did they catch up to us?”

“I’m not sure.”

Leticia detected the gaze a beat late. She got into her battle stance as she turned to look at Laura.

“Is it possible for you to discern who is observing us?”

Kairen and Leticia could tell that a hostile gaze was on them. However, they had no idea from where they were being observed. They also couldn’t discern if they were being observed by magic or the naked eyes.

“I can do it.”

Laura nodded her head as she used her observation magic. She looked through her surrounding, then she spoke.

“They are coming. There are around 50 of them.”

“Is Reygus amongst them?”

“There are several who possess massive amount of magical energy, but.... Reygus is not with them.”

Reygus’ magical energy was quite distinct. Moreover, if the stories were accurate, Reygus didn’t like stealth. It would be easy to identify him.

Kairen thought for a brief moment before he spoke.

“This means they probably predicted our route, and they used the Road of Emptiness to move their troops nearby.”

“Probably.”

“Since Reygus isn’t here, it seems they predicted multiple paths.”

The Road of Emptiness allowed one to travel a long distance in an

instant. However, there was a limit on how many members could go through it. Also, one could only travel to fixed waypoints. Even if Azell was injured, the party was moving at considerable speed. It wouldn't be easy to dispatch forces into their predicted paths.

Kairen spoke.

“This reveals a truth that gives us hope.”

“What is it?”

When Leticia asked the question, he quickly answered her.

“It is true that our enemies can locate us. However, it seems the precision of the method is low.”

If they could locate them in real time with precision, Reygus would have been dispatched here. Since he wasn't, it was evidence that their method of tracking had several restrictions.

Leticia smirked.

“You are awfully optimistic.”

“The fact that they don't precisely know what we will do is very important..”

Originally, they party planned on taking the shortest distance to the Albatan forest. If one thought about the mobility of the party, it was possible.

However, the Guardian Shadows sent a message during their travel. The Guardian Shadows wanted the party to follow them.

The exact reason was unknown, but the Guardian Shadows were guiding them in a slightly roundabout way..... It probably had to do something with throwing their enemies off their scent.

“Since Reygus isn't here, we have no need to be afraid.”

“There is a high probability that Reygus will arrive in short order.”

“We just have to slaughter them all before we escape. In terms of

firepower, we can overwhelm them.”

“I agree, but.... Our core fighting power isn’t in good shape. I would like you to take that into consideration.”

It was as Leticia had said. The party was in rough shape. They were able to recover somewhat using the black magic of Yuren and Laura. They looked fine on the outside, but the internal injuries hadn’t fully healed. Moreover, they hadn’t had proper rest, so they were exhausted.

Kairen spoke.

“We have no choice.”

“It is annoying, but I agree with you.”

Kairen grumbled as he looked away from Leticia. He looked towards Laura.

“Laura.”

“Yes.”

“I’ll leave Azell to you.”

“Huh? Why.....”

Laura was taken aback.

Kairen spoke.

“Yuren is healthier than you. Moreover, if we are going to leave behind one person to guard Azell, I believe a magician would be better than a warrior. Please take care of support from the rear.”

“...understood.”

Laura nodded her head.

Kairen, Leticia, Yuren and the Guardian Shadows moved to attack their enemies. They used gaze detection and observation magic to suss out the location of the enemies. It was better to hit them first rather than wait for them to attack.

The Dragon Demon king worshippers calmly greeted the party.

The Dragon majin, who looked to be the leader, spoke as he clashed his sword against Kairen.

“I guess I was being too shameless in thinking that our ambush would succeed.”

It wasn't the case with all their members, but at the very least, the commander of this party was an elite from the Plain of Darkness. Such a being was able to detect Laura using her observation magic on them.

The Dragon Majin let out his killing intent.

“I want you to throw away any hope of escaping this place with your lives intact.”

“I'll return those exact words to you.”

The two exchanged fierce sword strikes. Kairen was impressed by his opponent's skill. His opponent had smoothly negated the ambush earlier, and his sword strikes were sharp enough to send chills up Kairen's spine. His swordsmanship was excellent, and his body was clearly superior to Kairen's injured body.

‘He's strong. Has he gone through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual?’

Since he was a Dragon Majin, it was hard to discern this truth. Still, the Dragon Majin was strong in his Dragon Demon Qi and Dragon Arts that it naturally made Kairen wonder about it.

Kah-ahng!

Sparks flew as the two swords exchanged blows.

It was a short, but intense exchange. The fight ebbed and flowed between the two. The injured Kairen was inferior in term of strength and speed.

However, he possessed techniques he had cultivated for over a hundred years. His twin swords danced in a precise and skillful manner. Kairen stopped the Dragon Majin before he could gain

any momentum.

The Dragon Majin spoke.

“As expected, the fame of the Dragon Sword Duke wasn’t unfounded! However, all five of you are wounded! Even if you have some of the Guardian Shadows by your side, this will be your grave.”

“Hmmm. Thank you for the information.”

Kairen grinned.

“This confirms it. You guys don’t have accurate information regarding our situation.”

“What?”

Chapter 149 - Heaven and Hell (5)

Kairen grinned.

“This confirms it. You guys don’t have accurate information regarding our situation.”

“What?”

“You should speak after you check what is going on in the surrounding. ”

Kairen purposefully delayed attacking him. He gave the others some respite.

They were in a forest, so the Dragon Demon worshippers could only keep track of the members near them. They couldn’t see what their allies were doing. However, everyone was connected through communication magic as they fought. The Dragon Majin was taken aback as reports started to fly in.

“Koo-ahhhhhk!”

“Ah-ahk! Y...you bastards.....!”

The screams of Dragon Demon king worshippers erupted from various locations inside the forest.

There had been 50 Dragon Demon king worshippers, and each of their battle prowess was considered peerless when compared to a regular human soldier. The ones gathered in the forest could have easily slaughtered a human army that was 10 times their size.

However, there were over 200 Guardian Shadows here. They were like a nightmare to the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

A vein bulged on the Dragon Majin’s face.

“Where did so many of them.....!”

After they had located the party, the Dragon Demon king worshippers had kept their distance as they observed the party

from afar. This was why they had no idea how many Guardian Shadows were with them. Moreover, the Guardian Shadows had kept themselves hidden.

If a Guardian Shadow wanted to stay hidden, even Azell wouldn't be able to sense them until they got close. The fact that they were so stealthy meant the Dragon Demon king worshippers never knew when Guardian Shadows would make their appearance. This fact acted as a deterrent.

So how could they know about the Guardian Shadows when they had observed them from afar?

Kairen let out a cold laugh.

“Well, I'll kill you before all your underlings get slaughtered.”

“Says who! At the very least, I'll kill you.....!”

Ping!

Before the Dragon Majin could finish his sentence, he saw a light made out of magic come towards him from the corner of his eyes. When he blocked the attack in fright, Kairen struck out with his sword, and at the same time, he emitted a powerful mental wave.

‘No! I was duped!’

The Dragon Majin quickly reacted by tilting his body. However, he soon realized that Kairen's attack was a faint. Kairen had used a mental wave, which made it seem as if his feint was the real attack. He had baited this reaction from the Dragon Majin.

Too-hahk!

Instead of a frontal sword strike, Kairen kicked the Dragon Majin on his side. He was wearing a magic armor, but the force of the strike reached his body to break his bones.

“I don't care if you curse me for being cheap. I'll gladly take it. You probably would agree with me that this isn't a situation where we should fight one on one with our pride on the line.”

The one to shoot the beam of light was Yuren. Yuren had also linked all the members of the party with his communication magic, so Kairen had requested for Yuren to snipe at his opponent.

In a live battle, one had to guard one's weak points at all time. The battle was decided when the Dragon Majin had revealed his weak point. Kairen's sword ruthlessly cut open the Dragon Majin's neck.

“...hoo-ooh.”

Kairen let out a small sigh as he watched the Dragon Majin fall with blood spraying out from his neck. It seemed the Dragon Majin was a knight with a lot of pride. He had wanted to fight Kairen one on one. Kairen felt a bit bitter at defeating his enemy in such a manner.

‘What a luxury for me to have to express such a sentiment.’

Kairen let out a bitter laugh. He never expected to feel such sentiment towards a Dragon Demon king worshipper.

After wiping out the Dragon Demon king worshippers, Kairen gave directions to the party.

“Fortunately, we wrapped this up faster than I had expected. Let's get out of here before their reinforcement arrive. It'll be a bit rough on Azell, but we have to as fast as possible.”

“We'll do so. However, if we are being tracked, won't we be caught by Reygus?”

“It'll happen sooner rather than later.”

Kairen answered Leticia's prediction.

The method they were using had low precision, but they were able to find the party. Moreover, it didn't matter how fast the party moved. They had the use of the Road of Emptiness, so it was a matter of time before they caught up with their party.

If the party was healthy, it might have been possible for them to

evade their enemies. However, it was impossible at the speed the party was moving at.

Kairen pointed towards the Guardian Shadows.

“As I’ve said before, we have no choice but to trust them.”

“I’m a bit worried. I wonder where they are taking us.”

Leticia, who had grumbled about the Guardian Shadows, felt apologetic towards the Guardian Shadows within the next 30 minutes.

5

“What’s our current situation?”

A girl named Omega was sitting next to Balseru. He asked her a question. Omega answered as she opened her eyes.

“They are on the move after slaughtering the enemy force. Soon, they’ll arrive at the meeting place.”

“We were quite fortunate in the fact that we gathered the Guardian Shadows. If Reygus had been present, we wouldn’t have been able to handle him with such numbers....”

Balseru let out a sigh of relief.

It was his decision to gather the Guardian Shadows around Azell’s party. He was also using the Guardian Shadows to guide the party towards Count Rivelis of the Iellos kingdom. He was a member of the Guardian Shadows. The count would be waiting for them with healers and supplies. Since Azell’s party was avoiding villages and cities in an attempt to deter civilian casualties, the count’s help would be very precious to the party.

Omega looked up at him as she asked the question.

“Shouldn’t we join up with them? Isn’t that.....”

“We shouldn’t.”

“Why?”

“Omega, have your memories returned?”

“It is still flowing in.”

Omega furrowed her brows.

When Balseru told her the ‘truth’ he had discovered, the memories she had thought she had lost forever from her past life started to come back to her.

No, it wasn’t just that. Somehow, events from much before.... The memories from before her birth was starting to flow in as if it was her own memories.

It was the memories of her ancestors.

Her father and mother’s memories were included. The memories stretched back into the distant past. It was the memories of her bloodline.

Omega was able to find out about her true identity through those memories, and she realized the true meaning behind the prophecy.

“I believe I know who made us.”

Balseru had started his memory recovery process earlier compared to Omega. Even if all his memories were assembled, he was sure he wouldn’t be able ascertain who had created the Guardian Shadows. The being that made the Guardian Shadows probably intended to remain anonymous until the end.

That didn’t bother him at all. As he found out the truth, he could naturally guess at who the being was. However, he would feel no resentment even if he never found out who he was.

The prophesied being had appeared.

Hero Azell Karzark would finally conclude their cruel and hopeless fight.

“I really am thankful to him. I lived a cowardly life to be able to reach this moment. That is why I want to eliminate any chance of failure.”

Balseru had purposefully sent only the Guardian Shadows towards Azell's party. However, he and Omega didn't join up with them.

"All the Keepers of Prophecy still in existence has to gather in one location. That is the only way we could give him what we have kept in custody."

Until that moment, Azell and the Keepers of the Prophecy had to stay safe. They had always done this, but they had to keep the probability of a Keeper of Prophecy being killed as low as possible.

"You know, I....."

Suddenly, Omega spoke.

"...I always thought even if I knew who I was, I thought that knowledge wouldn't mean anything to me."

Omega had forgotten even her own name. However, she hadn't minded it. The hate and the sense of duty within her heart was everything to her.

However, when her memories were revived after hearing the 'truth', she found herself smiling in spite of herself.

"However, I no longer feel that way. I'm glad he is the prophesied person."

"I know we shouldn't say such things when we are faced with our impending destruction, but.... I feel the same way."

Balseru let out a bitter laugh. As he recovered his memories, he was captivated by feelings he had never thought he could feel.

"What do you mean?"

Suddenly, a voice intruded between the conversation between the two. Balseru turned to look behind him.

The Keepers of Prophecy Leone and Jares had arrived. When Balseru and Omega caught sight of them, they laughed.

They looked quite ridiculous. The Sleepless Guardian Theta was floating in the air as it hauled Jares and Leone on each side like luggage.

Leone's eyes turned round.

“Uh? Balseru is laughing?”

“Alpha is laughing. Am I dreaming right now?”

Even Jares was taken aback. They knew they looked absurd, but Balseru was laughing at them. For the past dozens of years, they would have never imagined they would be able to see such a sight.

Balseru spoke.

“It seems I was quick to laugh in my past life. Well, that doesn't matter now.”

“The day when the prophecy will be realized is fast approaching, and I guess there are a lot of surprises in store for us.”

Leone climbed off of Theta as he spoke.

It was the same as before when Omega gathered all the Keepers of Prophecy when Azell's party clashed with Reygus. Everyone was instructed to follow Azell's party, and they were told to join up with Balseru as soon as possible.

Leone and Jares had been the closest to them. Moreover, they had a high rank magician Theta in their party. This was why they were able to come here so quickly. They had been hauled here by Theta like luggages.

Balseru spoke.

“Azell-nim is the man from the prophecy.”

“...Azell-nim?”

Jares looked towards Balseru as if he thought this was all outrageous. Balseru just smiled.

“When you hear the truth, you will also call him by that

honorific.”

“Hmm. I am starting to wonder if you’ve finally gone crazy.”

“How did you verify it?”

Leone ignored Jares’ sarcastic words as he asked the question.

Balseru answered him.

“Dragon Demon General Reygus confirmed it. Reygus said he was the hero Azell Karzark, who had killed the Dragon Demon king Atein in the Dragon Demon war.”

“What”

“What did you just say?”

<Are you telling us the truth?>

Leone, Jares and Theta were dismayed. Balseru nodded his head.

“Of course, I’m telling you the truth. The most credible witness had confirmed this truth. Moreover, it seems I won’t have to try hard to convince you guys of this truth.”

“Ah.....”

It was as he said.

When they heard the truth, the expression of Leone and Jares turned peculiar. Suddenly, tears started flowing out from Leone’s eyes.

“Ha.....”

Leone didn’t even have the presence of mind to wipe away his tears. He just laughed.

“Ha ha ha. I...I see. That’s what happened.....”

The memories they had completely lost started to return. The memories of their lives, and the memories of those that came before them.....

They also found out why they were chosen to become the

Keepers of the Prophecy.

Moreover... They found out why Azell Karzark was the man from the prophecy.

“What the hell? This is ridiculous.... So that’s how it is?”

Jares was also struck dumb.

His memories were coming back.

He had thought his memories had been lost forever, but he could clearly remember the faces of his father, mother, brother and sister. His father had been strict, and his mother had been a timid person. Then there was his playful brother, and his constantly talking younger sister, who always followed Jares like a puppy.

The moments he had shared with them came back to him. He was from a noble family in the frontier, and he had received education for the time when he would have to rule over his barren territory. He remembered the conversations he shared with his family when they gathered each night for dinner. His family had taken time to talk about what they did each day.

Tears started to fall from Jares’ eyes.

He had lost everything, and he had been waiting for this moment.

Moreover, he realized it was worth the wait. When Jares realized this truth, a bright smile appeared on his face.

Chapter 150 - Dogfight (1)

1

The Dragon Demon palace was in turmoil.

Through Reygus, they had discovered the true identity of Azell Zestringer, who had interfered with their plans several times. He was the great sinner Azell Karzark. He was the one that had killed Atein.

It wasn't as if no one had been leery of this possibility.

When the Sky Splitter made its appearance, there were some in the Plain of Darkness that had started to become suspicious of Azell's identity.

Still, they had assumed he was a descendant. They could have never imagined that he was the original Azell Karzark. They had gathered too many evidence that had corroborated Azell Karzark's death to even think of it as a possibility.

Humans couldn't live for 220.

Moreover, Azell had been fated to die, because he had received a curse from Atein.

It was natural to assume that a descendant of Azell that they had been unable to wipe out had inherited the Sky Splitter.

However, Reygus had confirmed the veracity of this truth. On top of everything, the elder that had lived far away from the center of power after the Dragon Demon war moved as if he had been waiting for this moment. He left the Plain of Darkness to join with the hunting party that was tracking down Azell.

When this truth was delivered to Niberis, she was struck dumb by it.

“He is the genuine Azell Karzark....?”

“That's what they said.”

Regina lowered her head.

Niberis wasn't the only one struck dumb by the news. It was the same for Regina. How many times had she treaded between life and death as he mocked her? Still, she had never expected him to be the Azell Karzark. He was the nightmare of all Dragon Demon king worshippers, and he had skipped 220 years to be reborn in this time!

Niberis asked the question.

"How can this be?"

"I have no idea. There is no information available beyond that....."

"He hadn't spoken about my father as if he knew him, because he was trying to mess with me. It means he spoke the truth."

All kinds of thoughts boiled up within her. It wasn't just her resentment and hatred towards him.... A peculiar feeling that transcended her hate and resentment arose within her.

"What about Kieren and Jeffers?"

"They've already been dispatched."

Regina knew Niberis would ask about their whereabouts, so she had already done her research.

Kieren and Jeffers had been humiliated when they faced off against the Guardian Shadows. When they heard the news, they immediately got ready for battle before heading out.

Suddenly, Regina had a peculiar expression on her face.

"However....."

"What is it?"

"Lord Baldazark took the elite force that his tribe had been conserving. However, Lord Almarick...."

"He went out by himself? Or did he take a small number of the

elite troops?”

“No, he didn’t.”

“Stop talking in such vague terms.”

“I’m sorry. I responded that way, because the situation is a bit weird.”

When Niberis became irritated, Regina quickly apologized.

“Before Lord Almarick could lead the Almarick tribe’s elite units out, someone had already taken all of them out. This is why he struck out on his own.....”

“What?”

Niberis was taken aback.

She couldn’t comprehend what had happened. Niberis, Kieren and Jeffers were the new generation They had taken on the name of their tribes, and they had inherited the tribe’s Dragon weapons. They fully represented the tribes now. The elders possessed the hallowed bloodline, but it was inevitable that their bodies had become weak as time passed. They had ceded their position to the younger generation.

So why would they shun Jeffers now?

‘Did one of Almarick’s forebears step forward?’

Regina spoke carefully.

“It seems that is also true for the Aunsaurus tribe.....”

The exact details hadn’t been leaked to outsiders, but the Aunsaurus tribe was in a state of chaos. The fact that Laura had run away with the Vitan’s Chalice was bad enough, but the next heir they had chosen had been killed. Dikal had been slaughtered alongside their secret weapon called the Shadow’s Sword Belt. Their reaction was inevitable.

Moreover, the previous generation’s heir to Aunsaurus had been

lost to the Guardian Shadows too. They were already operating under water, and it seemed there wasn't much choice left for them.

The ones that that had retreated from the frontline, because of age had stepped forward again.

“Still, I think something different happened on the Almarick side. I'm sorry, but I wasn't able to gather any more information beyond that.”

“It seems I'll have to step out if I want to learn anything.”

Niberis came to a decision. Everyone was quickly heading out towards the battlefield. She decided it was unwise to stay behind, and grasp at old information that was lacking in the first place.

“I'll have to ask grandmother for an audience.”

Niberis headed towards Aincera. She went to get permission to mobilize her tribe's troops.

2

With the help of the Guardian Shadows, the party received treatment from a healer, and they left with valuable supplies. They were able to increase their speed by a little bit. Also, Azell's state had become noticeably better.

However, Azell wasn't in a state where he could enter into a battle.

He had been at the brink of death from the serious injuries he had suffered only a day ago. It was almost a miracle that he was able to walk on his own two feet right now.

The healer's ministration helped, but it was also life energy stripped from beasts and trees using black magic that had contributed to his recovery.

“Aren't there around 500 by now?”

Suddenly, Kairen mumbled to himself.

The Guardian Shadows following the party continued to grow. They kept themselves hidden, so their exact number couldn't be discerned. However, they were able to see Guardian Shadows join periodically, so it was possible to guess at the figure.

Azell was still unable to run quickly with his feet, so Yuren and Laura used their magic to fly him through the air. He had become their luggage.

Azell spoke.

"That sounds about right. I wonder how many there are...."

"They are beings with deep resentment towards Dragon Demon king worshippers. If we take that into account, I believe they might number in the thousands."

The Guardian Shadows that had been spread across the whole continent was gathering here. Then there was the Sleepless Guardians that followed around the Keepers of the Prophecy. If they all joined force, would Reygus be able to win against them? Their force was so large that it made Kairen wonder out loud.

However, Azell shook his head from side to side.

"That would be impossible."

"Is that so?"

Kairen let out a bitter laugh as he asked the question.

"What was it like during the Dragon Demon war?"

"The magicians were stationed at a distance, and it came down to a 1 on 1 or a 2 on 1 battle between powerful individuals. These individuals were like gods of calamity against armies."

It was true that the Guardian Shadows were strong. Their overall battle capability was high, and the strength of the individuals was also considerable. Then there were the magicians who possessed troublesome special skills.

However, it was all useless against Reygus.

A single combatant was needed against Reygus instead of several hundred combatants. The Soul Hammer had a special property where it got stronger as it faced more combatants. Reygus was an unreasonable being.

Kairen spoke.

“I really want to hear a lot of stories from you.... It is unfortunate that we don’t have the time to do so.”

“I’ll do so at a later date. You should be a bit patient for now.”

As he spoke those words, Azell turned to look at Laura.

“How is it?”

“It’s perfect. However, are you sure about this?”

“I just gave it back to its owner. Also, it is better for us if you possess it right now.”

Azell had returned the Vitan’s Chalice to Laura.

The inheritance of a Dragon Weapon didn’t take too long.

When he got a little bit better from being treated by the healer, he immediately made the decision to give it back to her.

Since he couldn’t fight, this would be the best option. It would really be stupid if he clung onto a weapon that he couldn’t use right now.

Azell spoke.

“Since you’ve seen me use it, you should be able to use it better now.”

“But I’m the original owner.”

“So what of it?”

“Sometimes you can be very detestable.”

Laura sulked a little bit.

The way Azell had used the Vitan’s Chalice had been a big help to

Laura. Even before she had handed the weapon over to Azell, Laura had a very deft touch in operating the Vitan's Chalice. She would be able make very good use of the techniques that had been displayed by Azell.

"I told you all I know. It is up to you to find out a way to use those knowledge."

Azell had shown her how he had operated the weapon, and he also gave a detailed accounting of what Aunsours was able to do with it.

For a user of the Dragon weapon, it was of big help to hear such detailed accounts. The magic infused within the weapon could only be used by a magician, but in terms of constructing an image, the foundation was the same for everyone. This was why Laura had learned many new ways to use the Vitan's Chalice.

Of course, the fact that Laura had used the Vitan's Chalice for a long time was a big plus. Her foundation was sound, and her senses were outstanding. This was why she was able to easily learn the new techniques.

Kairen queried.

"I'm asking about a hypothetical. Would it be possible for us to run away using the Vitan's Maze?"

"It's possible. Reygus doesn't have the talent to be able to track down the Vitan's Maze.... The trace left behind by the Tear would be a problem, but that can be solved if the Guardian Shadows could buy us some time."

The Guardian Shadows couldn't defeat Reygus, but they could buy the party some time. It was worthwhile to think about separating the party from the enemies using the Vitan's Maze. Then they could escape the battlefield while the Guardian Shadows bought them some time.

"A problem arises if others beside Almarick shows up...."

“Kieren and....Niberis.”

Laura’s expression darkened.

Azell spoke.

“Aside from the Book of Darkness, the Bleed Star is quite troublesome.”

When they fought last time, Azell had been whole, so he was able to take advantage of his inexperienced enemies.

However, Kieren would be a very troublesome opponents in their current situation.

Dragon weapon Bleeding Star.

It was the Dragon Weapon used by Dragon Demon general Baldazark. It held dominion over any blood nearby. If one was bleeding from a wound, the blood would rise into the air before being sucked towards Baldazark. Then the enslaved blood was used to create a magic circle. It allowed Baldazark to use magic of massive proportions. This was why Baldazark had been such a terror.

“If the blood controlled by the Blood Star sticks to a target’s body, the user will be able to track you down even to the end of the world.”

Moreover, they weren’t the only ones that possessed Dragon weapons.

Since they confirmed Azell’s identity, the Plain of Darkness would use all their available resources in an effort to kill him. All kinds of Dragon weapons they possessed would make their appearances.

Azell spoke.

“I’m not sure what the Keepers of Prophecy are doing. Since they’ve confirmed that I’m the one from the prophecy, shouldn’t they be telling me the secret they had been trying so hard to keep

hidden?”

“In the first place, we don’t know what the prophesied being actually means to them.”

Kairen spoke.

“For now, we are sure they want to protect you. They gathered this many Guardian Shadows for you.”

“However, I have no idea why they won’t show themselves.”

Azell let out a sigh. He couldn’t hide his frustration.

‘How can I be so powerless?’

At such an important moment, it weighed heavily on his heart that he was a burden right now.

This had nothing to do with whether he trusted his comrades or not. No matter how he thought about it, the situation was too dangerous.

Suddenly, Laura asked him a question.

“There is a possibility that I don’t really like thinking about.....”

“Mmm?”

“What if there are other Dragon Dragon generals still alive besides Reygus?”

“Maybe.....”

Azell furrowed his brows.

“Almarick might still be alive.”

“What makes you say that?”

Chapter 151 - Dogfight (2)

“I have Reygus’ words and the Dragon weapons as proof.”

Reygus spoke these words when he spoke about Carlos.

‘You sent my friends to the underworld.....’

Azell had extrapolated from Reygus’ words that the other Dragon Demon generals would be unable to return from death unlike him.

Laura queried.

“What about the Dragon weapons?”

“The guy called Jeffers Almarick wasn’t using Almarick’s Dragon Weapon. It seemed the Soul Hammer wasn’t passed on, and it seems the Storm’s Scream hadn’t been passed on either. That is my proof.”

If his speculation was correct, it was the worst case scenario.

Reygus had become an Undead, yet he had become stronger than the version of himself during the Dragon Demon war. Almarick might be in a similar situation, and if Atein revives.....

‘No one will be able to stop them.’

Azell bit his lips.

His heart felt heavy, and his head hurt. It had been a long time since he felt such a desolate feeling. In the past, he had a friend that had been able to share such emotional load with him.

‘Carlos.....’

Azell’s eyes unconsciously headed towards Yuren.

Yuren smiled as if to reassure him.

“Don’t worry about it. I’m not sure what our enemies will do, but when I took a nap, I received a new secret technique from the guide. I’m sure everything will work out.”

His words failed to reassure Azell.

Yuren was claiming he had learned a secret technique he didn't know by taking a nap. He was claiming his overall battle prowess had been strengthened.

How could he feel reassured after hearing such words?

The problem was the fact the Yuren could really back up what he had said.

‘Who and what the hell is this guide?’

Was Carlos really the unidentified guide leading Yuren?

He didn't have proof, but he wished it was so. He wanted it to be as Reygus had suspected. He wanted Carlos to be alive... No, he didn't have to be alive. Azell just wanted some part of Carlos to exist in this world. How great would it be if Carlos had left behind a presence in this world to help him?

‘If you are alive, this is the time to show up. If you made the effort to send your descendent, you should have at least given him a Dragon weapon.’

Azell knew he was being a baby, but he continued to complain within his thoughts.

3

The Dragon Demon King worshippers caught up with Azell's party once again on the next day.

After their first attack, Kairen, Yuren and Leticia tried to avoid as many locations that possessed waypoints leading to the Road of Darkness. Then they assessed possible locations where the enemies could station their troops. They moved to avoid such locations.

Still, there was a limit to such a method. Their enemies could track them, and they could travel long distances using the Road of Darkness.....

“Ignore them! Just run away!”

Kairen didn't engage each and every one of their enemies.

「Protect.....」

「The man from the prophecy.....」

「We will.....」

「Protect!」

The sound of whispering children rang out from the surrounding.

The white ghost-like figures ran through the forest. They kept appearing and disappearing as if they were false images. It was a bizarre sight where they were sliding across the grass.

None of the party members knew their exact number, but it was evident that the number of Guardian Shadows following them had exceeded a thousand. It was such an overwhelming number that it really made one wonder if all the Guardian Shadows on this continent was gathered here.

The Dragon Demon king worshippers had created a wide net to impede the progress of the party. They were taken aback by the sight.

“What is going on with these ridiculous numbers!”

In the past dozens of years, they had fought the Guardian Shadows in the dark. They had never faced such an overwhelming numbers before. The Guardian Shadows operated all across the continent, and highest number of Guardian Shadows gathered in one place was 200 according to the records.

The net they had formed was made up of around 100 Dragon Demon king worshippers.

The difference in number couldn't be overcome.

It was true that each Dragon Demon king worshippers were stronger than the Guardian Shadows. However, the Guardian Shadows moved as one. Their teamwork was excellent, and they

weren't weak against physical attacks unlike humans. This was why the Guardian Shadows became more effective in rough terrains where they held a decisive numbers advantage.

In an instant, the Guardian Shadows destroyed the enemy line. Azell's party was able to break through, and they didn't even have to participate in the battle.

However, this skirmish allowed the Dragon Demon king worshippers to narrow down the party's route.

Another day passed yet their enemies had not attacked. However, the party knew they were being watched.

Kairen was able to guess at the enemy's plan.

'They want to avoid a direct confrontation for now. Are they trying to herd us?'

If the Guardian Shadows were included, the party was a fairly large army. However, they weren't restricted in their movements by their large number.

Moreover, as the party's health improved, their travel speed increased.

The healer and the recovery items provided by the Keepers of the Prophecy had been a big help in this respect. They were even able to switch out their damaged armors. They drank healing potions and magic recovery potions like water to hasten their recovery.

It had been only two days since Azell had clashed with Reygus, but he had recovered enough to be able to summon his Dragon weapon.

'However, in a direct confrontation..... I'll still be a burden.'

Currently, he could merely walk on his own two feet. It would be impossible for him to fight.

However, he was able to use his magical energy. It would take some time, but it would be possible for him to be of help by using

his Sky Splitter and clones.

Kairen spoke.

“Unlike yesterday, it seems they aren’t willing to waste their troops. They are observing us in real time to accurately predict our route. It seems they plan on putting up a barricade to stop us.”

They could feel the gazes of their enemies. Moreover, they could feel the gazes coming from all sides.

It seemed they had dispatched scouts in the distance as the party was put on a constant surveillance. It seemed they would be unable to avoid the surveillance of their enemies.

Kairen spoke.

“We are traveling at pretty high speeds, but.....”

Azell was being moved with flight magic, and they had travelled in a straight line for about 70 kilometers after they broke through the encircling net. If they wanted to maintain enough magical energy and stamina to be able to battle at any moment, they had to maintain this speed.

“Even if we make changes to our course, we can avoid the fact that they would also be able to make changes to their prediction. They can’t concentrate all their forces in a single location, but it is possible to choose two to three locations.”

“So we have to choose a location where Reygus isn’t stationed.”

“No, in my estimation.... It won’t matter which route we choose.”

Kairen explained his reasoning.

As time passed, the party was getting healthier, and the number of Guardian Shadows were swelling.

Their enemies knew this fact, so it meant that their enemies had come prepared. No matter which force they faced, it would hold

troops that would be hard to breakthrough. Moreover, Reygus would show up when the party was bogged down in the fight.

Kairen spoke.

“We have to defeat them.”

“How would you suggest we do this?”

At Yuren’s question, Kairen looked at his surrounding as he spoke.

“Our strength is the fact that we are gathered in one place. Don’t we have our dependable allies with us?”

“I guess you are right, but.....”

It was unknown as to how many Guardian Shadows were actually with them. The number kept swelling even after the number reached a thousand.

It was now plain to see why such powerful beings such as the Dragon Demon king worshippers had been afraid of the Guardian Shadows. If there were couple hundred of them, maybe Reygus might not be able to overcome them.....

“Even if our enemies gather a big force, we are at an advantage.”

When the number of troops exceeded several hundreds, they needed a decent amount of space to be able to fight effectively.

However, the party had strictly traveled locations where there weren't many people around. Basically, they were traversing through mountains or forests.

If one looked at the history of wars on this continents, there were many cases where a specialized troop could easily hold off an opponent that was several dozen times larger if they held the right terrain. There was no way such a large group of Dragon Demon king worshippers could display their full strength in this forest.

In that aspect, the existence of the Guardian Shadows were a cheat. They were phantom-like figures that could ignore the

restriction placed by their surroundings, and they boasted a preposterous ability that linked each of the Guardian Shadows to each other.

Kairen spoke.

“The thing that bothers me the most are the Keepers of the Prophecy. If they are with us, the probability of victory rises. So why aren’t they showing themselves?”

Kairen didn’t expect much from the Keepers of Prophecy in terms of individual fighting prowess. However, the Undeads they traveled with were very skilled. It would be a big help if such strong beings could join them. This was especially true, because the party wasn’t in perfect condition.....

Suddenly, Yuren spoke.

“Maybe they are waiting for a crucial moment to show up?”

“Mmm?”

“What if they show up during the moment of direst need? Maybe they are trying to show off?”

“...I would like to believe they are above such petty way of thinking.....”

Kairen shook his head from side to side as he made the decision.

“We’ll prioritize breaking through their line. Our most important objective is to reach the Albatan forest. It would prevent them from chasing us.”

Another seven hours passed... The sun was about to rise in the early morning when the party clashed with Dragon Demon king worshippers that numbered over a thousand troops.

4

The ones to attack first was the Guardian Shadows.

The Guardian Shadows had the stealth capabilities of ghosts, so

they attacked after getting close to their enemies. After the first clash, the white forms swept over their enemies like a wave as the sound of battle rang out.

Azell's party slowly followed behind them.

They were assessing the number and composition of their enemies. This wasn't a fight where they were trying to win. They had to breakthrough this line, so they didn't charge headlong into the battlefield.

Still, their enemies tried to attack them from a distance.

Pah-ahng!

Magic spells and arrows traversed a distance of 300 meters towards the party as they detonated. However, Laura and Yuren was able to block these attacks easily.

Yuren expressed his amazement.

"There are so many of them that are able to show such accuracy at this distance....."

It was a location where a mountain met another mountain. It was the worst terrain for a large force to operate on. Moreover, the sun hadn't come up yet, so visibility was a problem. The trees should have also helped in hiding the party.

However, a good amount of attack was flying towards them. There were several dozen skilled practitioners that were able to accurately attack them in such conditions.

It signified that the Plain of Darkness had gathered their elites for this venture. Even if the Guardian Shadows held a decisive number advantage, they couldn't be overconfident.

Azell focused his mind to survey the large battlefield, then he spoke.

"Reygus isn't here."

Laura spoke immediately afterwards..

“There is Jeffers. Moreover... The Aunsaurus tribe is here.”

Everyone turned to look at Laura in surprise.

“Isn’t that your tribe?”

“Yes. I can feel the energy of the elders.”

“How strong are the elders?”

“They stopped leading from the front when they aged, but.... They are excellent magicians. They were our teachers.”

“We’ll have to be cautious.”

Their bodies weakened as they aged, so they had withdrawn from participating in battles a long time ago. This was why their senses had dulled.

If they were to fight as warriors, this fact would have been a critical weakness. However, as magicians, they would be dangerous despite such a disadvantage.

-Blade of Storm!

The surrounding trees shook as a powerful wave of Dragon Demon magic spread into the surrounding.

Jeffers Almarick had summoned his Dragon weapon.

It wasn’t just him.

-Chain of Storm!

-Son of Fire!

-Spear of Pain!

Dragon weapons were being summoned from various locations. Leticia was taken aback.

“They had this many Dragon weapons?”

Chapter 152 - Dogfight (3)

“They’ve been gathering them for the past 220 years.”

Laura answered him.

“Of course, they would have a lot.”

“Mmm.....”

The party groaned.

Dragon weapons were being summon in succession. Their enemies had already summoned nine Dragon weapons.

It was inevitable.

The Plain of Darkness severed the succession of Dragon weapons in the outside world, yet they continued to create Dragon weapons.

Then there was the Dragon weapons possessed by the survivors of the Dragon Demon war.

Those that were from the Dragon Demon race used their longevity to work on their own Dragon weapons over time. The Dragon Majins used the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual to make their Dragon weapons. These Dragon weapons were passed onto the next generation. Even if some were lost during battle, the number of Dragon weapons continued to grow.

There was a change that occurred on the battlefield.

Holes started to form in the wave of Guardian Shadows. The powerful attacks by the wielders of the Dragon weapons started to changed the tide of the battle.

Azell spoke.

“Don’t be afraid. Dragon weapons aren’t created equal. Not all Dragon weapons possess terrifying power such as the Soul Hammer and the Vitan’s Chalice. The Dragon weapon possessed by Jeffers isn’t sublime. However, it would be considered above

average even during the Dragon Demon war.”

“That is really comforting to know.”

Leticia grumbled.

Azell grinned.

“Then let me tell you an additional information that might soothe your mind a little bit more. Even if all the Dragon weapon users here attacked at the same time, Laura could handle them on her own.”

“What?”

Everyone turned to look at Laura in surprise. She accepted their gazes with a blank face as she slightly nodded her head.

“If we are talking only about defense, I can do it.”

“.....”

Everyone was at a loss for words.

Then they remembered how Azell had used the Vitan’s Chalice against Reygus. It wasn’t out of the realm of possibility. Moreover, there was a fact that the party had overlooked....

“The Vitan’s Chalice was a Dragon weapon made for a magician. In truth, I was only able to bring out half its power.”

When Azell received the Vitan’s Chalice from Laura, he had talked about this fact.

Of course, the previous Laura hadn’t been that strong. However, she had learned how to bring out the true power of the Vitan’s Chalice from Azell. She was a much scarier being compared to before.

“Mmmm.....”

Kairen was observing the battlefield through the Magic Eye put up by Yuren. After surveying the battlefield for a short amount of time, Kairen spoke.

“These guys... It seems there are close to 3,000 Guardian Shadows gathered here. It might exceed that number.”

“There are that many?”

Leticia was surprised. Even if the terrain caused them some trouble, there was a reason why the elites of the Dragon Demon king worshippers were struggling against the Guardian Shadows.

Kairen spoke.

“We’ll traverse the ridge on the left. We’ll climb it diagonally to breakthrough their line. Can you do it, Azell?”

“In this instance, I’ll have to do it even if it kills me.”

Azell grinned.

Laura spoke.

“I’ll support you. Don’t worry about it.”

“I’ll leave it up to you.”

In Azell’s current condition, he couldn’t generate the requisite speed needed to break through their line. In the end, he had no choice, but to rely on Laura’s magic.

Azell spoke as he looked up into the sky.

“Shall I send a single blow towards them as a greeting?”

At the same time as he spoke those words, the fading darkness covering the sky parted.

-Come out Dragon Maken!

In an instant, all the Dragon Demon king worshippers on the battlefield looked up towards the sky. From beyond the heavens, a light exploded to rip apart the darkness of daybreak.

-Sky Splitter!

An elder from the Aunsaurus tribe was a survivor of the Dragon Demon war. The elder once again felt the fear he had felt from

several hundred years ago revive within him, and he felt his body freeze.

“That cursed sword really made its appearance once again!”

It was the weapon of the devil. It had killed their god, Dragon Demon king Atein.

However, the fear they felt overshadowed the hate they felt. How many of their comrades were killed by that sword?

The elder's voice shook as he shouted out his words.

“A...Azell Karzark is over there! Everyone go get him!”

The current young generation had no idea how frightening an existence Azell was. For them, Azell was the devil from a legend. The ones that had faced him before was the only ones that knew true fear of facing him.

This was why the elder knew his troops would be able to fight him without being overwhelmed by the fear. The elder was frozen as he tried to rationalize the situation. However, his face froze again.

-Come forth Dragon weapon! Vitan's Chalice!

A wave Dragon Demon magic on par with the Sky Splitter spread into the surrounding. Then the space in front of him became distorted.

“Laura! You ungrateful traitor.....!”

Kwahhhhhh!

The light let out a sound akin to a scream. The pure white light looked like thunder, and it was coming towards him.

‘No! I have to get out of here! I have to break away, so I can stay hidden from him!’

In a flash, the thunderbolt burned through his defensive magic, and the inside of the elder's head turned white. He was paralyzed

from fear. He couldn't even think. Before he could respond, a Dimensional Distortion appeared next to him.....

Gwah-roo-roong! Ggwah-roo-roong!

The Sky Splitter, which was in a state of light, cut through the elder.

It was a direct hit.

The Magic Eye in the sky allowed Azell to lock in on the elder's position, and the Dimensional Distortion of Vitan's Chalice bridged the long distance between the two locations. The Sky Splitter was sent through to hit the target.

The Sky Splitter attacked at the speed of light. This was why it was possible to hit one's enemy in a split second. Of course, it was demanding to hit a target that was far away, and it was hard to lock in on one's target. This limitation was solved by teaming up with Laura.

Gwah-gwahng! Ggwahng! Ggwah-gwa-gwahng!

The two of them worked closely as they let out a continuous stream of attacks. They did this as they charged towards their destination. Sudden sneak attacks kept popping up all around the battlefield. The Sky Splitter's attacks disintegrated the line of the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

"This doesn't make any sense! Even if that is a Dragon weapon of a Dragon Demon general, how can this be possible!"

Everyone started to scream.

The fact that there were over 3,000 Guardian Shadows was a disaster in itself. Now the Guardian Shadows were being used as shields as Azell and Laura used the legendary Dragon weapons that was famous even in the Dragon Demon war. A nightmare occurred when the two weapons were used in concert with each other.

When Laura was their ally, she had worked in the darkness. So

they didn't know how scary she was. However, now that they had to face her as an enemy they understood why the humans had feared Aunsaurus. They felt the fear deep within their bones.

She wasn't the only one that was terrifying.

“Dragon sword, burn the evil darkness!”

Kairen climbed to the highest point on the ridge, and his chant echoed throughout the mountain.

Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah!

A sharp sword energy cut through the air as Kairen swung his Dragon sword. The sword energy flew horizontally as it cut through the mountain. The mountain peak fell on top of the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

“Ahhhhhhhhhk!”

The Dragon Demon king worshippers screamed.

In such pandemonium, only one person was running. He ran faster than the falling speed of the mountain peak. He ran across the side of the mountain cliff to climb up the ridge. It was a surprisingly acrobatic move, and he was able to escape the attacks of the Guardian Shadow.

“Come! Oh, Storm!”

A swirling gale of wind swept over the party.

It was Jeffers Almarick. He used the gale created by his Dragon weapon to restrict the party's movement, and he aimed the blue flame crawling up his transparent blade towards a single spot. He concentrated his attack.

The blue flame swirled into the air.

The magic flame was added into the gale as the flame was amplified. One couldn't breathe in such a firestorm, and it felt as if one's body was about to be swept up into the air. The blue magical flame kept swirling to increase its effectiveness.

However.....

“How laughable.”

Hwahhhhhk!

The current of cold air blew the flames away.

The surrounding temperature quickly dropped as if it was winter. The precipitation in the air froze to cover the mountain with snow. Leticia's yellow red eyes held murderous intent as she climbed up towards him.

Jeffers grinded his teeth.

“Ice Queen!”

After Leticia used Instantaneous movement to charge forward, she clashed with Jeffers.

When the sword and spear clashed against each other, a clear sound rang out. Then the cold current and the hot gale clashed against each other.

“Leticia!”

Yuren immediately moved to support Leticia, but Jeffers hadn't come here alone.

“Chet! Annoying bastards!”

The magicians supported Jeffers from below as sparks detonated in the air. It was the side effect of spells not being able to materialize.

Leticia spoke with an icy voice that was colder than the cold current created by her.

“If you just stayed silent in the corner, you might have gotten out of this alive. It seems you are begging for your death! However, I also am eager to put you in your grave.”

“You speak such words even though you are the shame of our tribe! I will kill you here to recover our honor!”

“You are a spoiled young master that is putting too much trust in your Dragon weapon. How laughable.”

Leticia snorted.

However, unlike her words, she didn't plan on fighting a life and death battle with Jeffers. Jeffers with his Dragon weapon wasn't an easy opponent. Moreover, the objective of the party was to break through the line of Dragon Demon king worshippers. She would bide her time before she would escape. She would leave behind Jeffers.

It happened at that moment.

Ooooooooooooooh!

Darkness started to sweep over the battlefield.

The sky had been slowly getting lighter, yet an unnatural darkness invaded the heavens.

Laura groaned when she saw this, and she mumbled a single word.

“Niberis.”

It was as she said.

It hadn't been long since the party had stated their battle with the intent of breaking through the line. However, the enemies stationed in other locations had already started to trickle in one or two at a time. One of the first ones to arrive was Niberis, who had arrived with her Book of Darkness summoned.

“The one with the name steeped in sin.... No, the great sinner Azell Karzark....”

From the time Niberis showed up on the battlefield, the darkness started to spread like a tsunami. She spoke in a low voice, but there was authority behind it that made it hard for others to breath.

“It is hard for me to believe that you are actually him, but I am thankful for the chance to be able to recover my father's honor.

Moreover.....”

A killing intent that was as cold as ice was emitted from her.

“I’ll avenge Duran’s death.”

5

In a flash, everyone’s gaze was focused on Niberis.

It was because the presence she was exuding was overwhelming. It was a stage where all kinds of Dragon weapons and high ranked magicians were showing off their powers. However, the imposing presence she was exuding was too large as it overwhelmed their presence.

As the darkness spread into the surrounding, bizarre monsters started appearing from within the darkness.

They were composed of darkness, so no light reflected off of them.

One could see the barest outline within the darkness. It was as if someone had drawn these monsters.

The tentacles of darkness danced as they appeared from within the darkness to lash out at the Guardian Shadows.

Gwuhhhhhhhh!

From between the tentacles, large monsters rampaged. They were made out of darkness, yet a purple flame covered them. They were made from the pain and grudge of the dead. The corrupted energy from these beings were used to devour corpses, and black magic was used to raise the Corrupted Bodies.

The surrounding darkness was basically a domain that was under the control of Niberis. All kinds of curses were inflicted onto the Guardian Shadows, and she imbued more power to her familiars.

Even if Niberis was a high rank black magician with superb Dragon Demon magic, she was showing a surprising amount of control over her power.

Azell immediately saw through to the reason behind it.

“It seems you plan on avoiding your earlier mistake. You’ve come up with a pretty clever idea.”

“I’ll think of your words as an innocent compliment.”

Niberis approached him.

Saibein’s Book of Darkness was also a top shelf Dragon weapon that had etched its name in the legends. There were many spells imbued within it, and in the past, Azell had stalled a great magic called ‘Queen of Darkness’ before it could manifest.

Just the initiation of the great magic had made Kairen shudder. This magic had the effect of explosively boosting the darkness magic of a magician.

It was such a large scale magic that it took a long time to materialize, so it had the downside of compromising one’s defense. Azell had used this weakness to his benefit in the last fight, and Niberis didn’t plan on repeating the same mistake.

She had summoned the Book of Darkness before entering the battlefield. She had completed the Queen of Darkness spell in preparation for this battle.

Chapter 153 - Dogfight (4)

“You won’t be able to run away so easily.”

The darkness around her danced as Corrupted Bodies rose up. The ominous product of black magic stopped the advance of the Guardian Shadows.

Kwah-kwah-kwahng! Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah!

Darkness arose from the Book of Darkness, and it was as if several dozen magicians were attacking at the same time. Magic spells carpet bombed the party. It was a terrifying amount of firepower where she would be able to handle even an army by herself.

Koo-gwah-gwah-gwah-gwah.....!

The mountaintop couldn’t withstand the assault, so it disintegrated.

As she oversaw all of this, Niberis mumbled to herself.

“It won’t work.”

Azell’s clone, which had been one with the darkness, had appeared from next to her. The clone let out a surprise attack

However, it was as Niberis had said. It wouldn’t work on her. She had already formed the Queen of Darkness spell, so it was akin to her having control over a castle wall and the troops within it.

“Koohk.....!”

“Now that I know you are the great sinner, I will never treat you lightly.”

The emanating darkness blocked Azell’s surprise attack, and a spell appeared from within the darkness.

Ggwah-gwang!

However, instead of Azell’s clone being destroyed, a powerful

force struck her barrier. She raged as she was pushed back in midair.

“Laura!”

Laura had used Vitan’s Chalice to create a Dimensional Distortion, and it had turned Niberis’ attack on herself.

Niberis’ gaze met Laura’s gaze.

“...yes. I’ll use this opportunity to settle my ill-fated relationship with you too.”

In the past, Niberis did not have a Dragon Weapon, so Laura had always been superior to her.

That wasn’t the case now. She had inherited the Book of Darkness, and she had learned how to operate it now. At the very least, she was sure she was on par with Laura. No, since she had formed the Queen of Darkness, she was stronger than Laura.

However, when she was about to attack, the sight in front of her eyes suddenly became distant. It was the eternal plain opened through the Vitan’s Chalice.

Niberis’ eyes widened.

‘What the hell?’

Laura had unnaturally expanded the space of a particular location, and it created a severe problem for Niberis. She had spread a cursed Darkness over the entire battlefield, but now she was far away from that Darkness.

‘I’ve been had!’

Niberis was sure Laura had made this calculated move to exploit her weakness. As a magician... No, as a Dragon weapon user, Laura had predicted how Niberis would use her Dragon weapon. Niberis had completely lost in terms of reading how her opponent would use her Dragon weapon.

This hadn’t resulted, because she was inferior in terms of power.

The difference came from Niberis' lack of knowledge.

Laura had heard all the facts she hadn't known about the Dragon weapons from Azell. She had heard all the account of how they were used during the Dragon Demon war. It was possible that Laura knew more about the Book of Darkness than Niberis.

This was why she was able to predict what Niberis would do, and she was able to come up with a plan to deal with Niberis.

When Niberis came here, she had already brought out her Dragon weapon, and she had activated the Queen of Darkness spell. Afterwards, she had been complacent. Laura had taken advantage of such mental weakness.

The cursed darkness she had spread over a large region continued to move farther away from her in the eternal plains. Then a light tore through the darkness as it moved towards her. It was the Sky Splitter.

“Ooh-oohk.....!”

Cold sweat started to emanate from Niberis' body. She had been able to block the attack thanks to the Book of Darkness, but her defense had been shredded into pieces in an instant.

Since she was focusing only on her defense, her situation was steadily getting worse. The eternal plain that had filled her vision started to distort as buildings that looked to be made out of countless mirrors started to emerge.

Niberis knew what this change meant. Her face paled.

‘This is the Vitan's Maze!’

This technique had always been Laura's strong point. It was a technique that created an isolated dimension.

At the same time, Niberis felt a terrifying amount of pressure wash over her. If she lost her concentration for even a second, all her magic spells would probably be canceled.

If she was to make a comparison, it was as if she was fighting in high altitude where oxygen was scarce. The act of trying to use magic in this space put a much bigger burden on her.

It wasn't simply that the Vitan's Maze created a pocket dimension. The pocket dimension itself gave an overwhelming advantage to the owner of the Vitan's Chalice.

‘This.....!’

Laura joined in the attack as she let out a torrent of magic. Niberis was forced into a corner.

She had completely fallen for a trap. She had wanted control over the entire battlefield, so she had used the Queen of Darkness spell. She had used her magic over a large area, and that had been a mistake. From the moment she was isolated from the battlefield through the eternal plain, all the spell she had prepared on her body had been canceled. Moreover, her opponent had created a battlefield that was absolutely advantageous to her.....!

‘I knew who my opponent was yet I was careless! I'm pathetic!’

Niberis raged at her own easygoing attitude.

Suddenly, a red flower petal fluttered past her eyes. The red flower petal was so stark against the cursed darkness that it looked unnatural.

Niberis knew what the flower petal signified.

‘Garden of Blood Flower!’

Afterwards, several hundred to several thousand flower petals started to invade the space.

The attack applied on Niberis by Azell and Laura was blunted. As massive amount of magical energy poured in, Niberis broke out of the Vitan's Maze.

“Bleeding Star.....!”

Kieren Baldazark had entered into the fight. Laura swallowed a

groan when she realized this.

Laura had thought she had completely isolated Niberis from the others. However, when she was transitioning from the eternal plains to the Vitan's maze, Kieren had applied a sharp attack. One had to be well informed about the special characteristics of the Vitan's Chalice, and one had to focus one's whole being into exploiting this opportunity.

The Vitan's Chalice and the Bleeding Star were very talented at creating advantageous fighting ground for their wielders. The two techniques that influenced the battlefield clashed as a powerful repulsive force formed.

Ggwah-gwah-gwahng!

There was no time to warn the others. The Vitan's Chalice and the Field of Blood Flower collapsed as storm swept over the surrounding.

In a flash, everyone on the battlefield halted.

The explosion itself was secondary. The wave of magical energy assaulted everyone on the battlefield like a storm.

Hoo-oooooooooh.....!

In the epicenter of the explosion, gust swirled as four people reappeared into normal space.

“Laura, it is regrettable that our reunion happened under such conditions.”

It was a young Dragon Demon male with beautiful blonde hair swirling about him. He spoke, and it really looked as if he found the situation to be regrettable.

“I owe you my life thanks to your actions last time, but.... I cannot forgive traitors.”

“It is regrettable, sir Baldazark.”

Laura answered him.

“However, my heart wasn’t with your side from the start. I found my passion when I met Azell.”

Since it was Kieren, Laura decided to tell him the truth. At the very least, Kieren had treated her like a person.....

Kieren asked her a question.

“Does this mean the nefarious rumors about the Aunsaurus tribe is true?”

“I’m not sure what you know, but it is probably true.”

“I see.....”

Kieren’s expression turned bitter.

Every rumor involving Laura had been nefarious In the Plain of Darkness, no one thought black magic experiments were wrong. However, these rumors had to do with the heir being made through an artificial process. Laura was his peer, so it was a bitter pill to swallow that Laura had been made through such a horrifying experiment.

“This is my last offer, Laura. If you surrender yourself, I’ll guarantee your survival.”

“You know my answer, right?”

“...yes.”

When he heard the answer he expected, Kieren let out a sigh. Soon, his face hardened from his resolve.

“Then I’ll treat you as the greatest of my enemies.”

Ooooooooooooooh.....!

Countless bead of blood rose around Kieren.

A large blood construct that was 10 meters in size was floating above his head.

Kieren spoke.

“I admit that the Vitan’s Chalice is a terrifying Dragon Weapon, but there’s been plenty of blood spilled on this battlefield. Do you really think you’ll be able to escape this place?”

Kieren had also summoned his Dragon weapon before he arrived at the battlefield. Then he fettered all the blood flowing on the battlefield. He changed the blood into his power.

Laura looked at Kieren and Niberis with nervous eyes.

Kieren and Niberis possessed powers that was on par with Laura.

The technique he had just used was proof of that.

If Azell’s body was whole, it might have been possible. However, they were at a disadvantage right now.

Suddenly, Azell spoke in a serious manner.

“...something is coming here.”

“Something?”

At Laura’s question, Azell answered through Whispering instead of vocalizing his words.

-I’m not sure. However, it is a being that is on par with Reygus in terms of power. This being is coming, while displaying his power quite openly....

-It’s that bad?

-Unlike these guys here, he hadn’t brought out his power, yet he is strong.

Kieren and Niberis was strong, but they were using all the power available to them. They were using their Dragon Weapons and the powers bestowed on them. The being that was coming towards them was setting his teeth on edge. The power he was leaking out was small, yet the latent power he possessed was huge.

-He is still far away. Still, he is overtly sending his presence only towards me as if he is trying to get a reaction out of me.

This truth caused Azell to shudder. This being was a long ways away, yet he was able to reveal his presence only to Azell, while hiding his presence from everyone else.

-He is coming here at an abnormally slow pace. It is as if he is taking a stroll.....

That was the part he couldn't understand.

Azell made a decision.

-We can't waste anymore time. We have to do this now.

-We are still too far off from being whole. If the sun isn't up, the speed at which we can gather won't be.....

-It'll have to be enough. I'll create an opportunity for our escape.

Leticia was occupying Jeffers. Yuren was occupying the magicians supporting Jeffers. Kairen was going around slaughtering the magicians one by one.

The Guardian Shadows still held the upper hand, but the problem was the fact the enemies were being reinforced as time passed. If they stayed any longer, Reygus would be here. If that happened, they would really be stuck here. They had to get out of here before that happened.

Azell sent a Whispering to all the members of his party.

-Soon, the sun will rise. At the first hint of light, I'll use a single attack. It'll be a signal.

Azell would know the exact moment when the sun rises above the mountain.

The first one to break the glaring contest was Niberis.

After falling for Laura's ploy, her cursed darkness had been cut off. However, there were some darkness that hadn't dissipated. When she filled the partial darkness with her magical energy, it immediately attacked her enemies.

Pah-cheet! Paht! Pah-bah-bah-baht!

As a high speed magic battle occurred, numerous sparks flew into the air.

However, the taut battle lasted only for a moment. Laura started being pushed backwards.

Their abilities as magicians were almost equal. The problem was the fact that Niberis had raised all her abilities to the extreme.

Moreover, Niberis used the strong advantage that came with possessing the Book of Darkness. She was able to simultaneously use all the magic spells engraved into her weapon. Of course, Niberis was doing this, because she was worried the Vitan's Chalice would send back her attacks using the Dimensional Distortion.

Kieren grinded his teeth.

"The Sky Splitter is really troublesome!"

He had joined forces with Niberis to overwhelm Laura with a single attack, but Azell didn't allow them do that. Clones were appearing from all directions, and the sword made out light raced through the sky.

'He is this strong even after suffering a life threatening injury! No wonder the king and my ancestor suffered defeat by his hands. If he was healthy, we wouldn't have stood a chance.'

Kieren shuddered.

He could tell at a glance that Azell suffering from an injury. He was seriously injured yet he was able to use a combination of Incarnation and the Sword Splitter. He was showing unbelievable amount of battle prowess, yet it seemed he was having a hard time coping with the backlash from using his magical energy.

Kieren was at peak condition compared to him. In a battlefield overflowing with blood, he could use his Dragon weapon to its fullest potential. He would be able to take down the injured and

out-of-breath Azell.

‘I have to take him down right here and now.’

Above all else, Azell had almost killed Niberis on numerous occasions. When he thought about that fact, he knew he had to bring this to an end.

Suddenly, Azell spoke.

Chapter 154 - Dogfight (5)

“The sun is rising.”

“What?”

In the midst of the loud sound of the battle, his opponent had spoken with magical energy behind his words. Azell had made sure that Kieren had heard his words.

Kieren couldn't decipher the meaning behind Azell's words. However, it took only a moment for Kieren's confusion to dissipate.

A powerful light stabbed at his eyes.

The sun had risen. The first sunlight started to part the dim darkness.

Azell knew the precise moment when the sun came up. Azell had already positioned himself, so the sun would be at his back. On the other hand, Kieren was facing towards the light. For a brief moment, he hesitated in his attack.

That brief moment was all Azell needed

In a flash, Azell's clone rushed forward. The blue Dragon Maken raged as it attacked.

“Koohk.....!”

Kieren was thrown off his guard, so he was frantic as he was pushed backwards.

However, there was a limit on what he could do when he was so close to his opponent.

He would have to calmly solve each problem as it arose.

As he came to that conclusion, Kieren was about to let out consecutive magic spells when Azell's clone disappeared.

‘What's going on?’

The clone had disappeared with impeccable timing, so Kieren had expended his magical energy for nothing. His Dragon Demon magic flowed freely, and it created a static noise for a brief moment.

Afterwards, another clone appeared from behind Kieren to swing a burning light sword. It was as if the thunder was roaring!

‘Horn of the Thunder Dragon!’

Ggwah-gwah-gwah-gwahng!

The blue thunderstrike sliced through Kieren as the after effects of attack reached even the next mountain.

However, a fierce energy erupted from within the dissipating thunderstrike. Kieren had been able to block the Horn of the Thunder Dragon head on.

“As expected, it seems you have the requisite skills needed to become the successor of Baldazark’s Dragon weapon.”

Azell wasn’t surprised.

Kieren had brought out his Bleeding Star, and he was able to bring out the full extent of its power by enslaving the blood on the battlefield. The amount of magical energy he possessed was overwhelmingly immense right now, so Kieren didn’t have to dodge the attack. He was able to block it head on. Of course, Azell had expected all of this.

It happened at that moment.

“They are retreating!”

There was confusion amongst the ranks of the Dragon Demon king worshippers when they saw something they couldn’t comprehend.

The Guardian Shadows had been pushing them hard, but now they were exiting like water ebbing on low tide. They used their special brand of stealth ability to escape. They disappeared as if

they melted into the ground.

They couldn't comprehend the actions of the Guardian Shadows. Kieren became guarded as he glared at Azell.

"It is right on time."

After a moment, Azell's clone raised his hand to point at the sky.

Since the clone had the sun to its back, the gesture was highly suspicious. However, Kieren couldn't help, but look up at the sky.

Then.....

"Niberis! Look up!"

Kieren finally realized what had happened, so he yelled out.

The sun had risen slowly towards the east, and it was burning in the middle of the sky. There was also a region in the sky that was opaque as if there was a strange distortion. It was as if an enormous tear was floating in the sky.

It was proof that the Dimensional Distortion was being used at a large scale. As the heir to his tribe, Kieren knew what caused this phenomena.

'Goblet containing the Heaven's Tears (Heaven's Tear Goblet)!'

During the dragon Demon war, this was one of the main reason why the humans had been terrified of Aunsaurus. The fear of him had been bone deep.

Laura spoke as if she was whispering those words.

"You are too late."

The Dimensional Distortion floating in the sky went through a change, and the sunlight from the eastern sky was gathered. The sunlight fell to the ground as if it was an unavoidable iron mace.

It was both Aunsaurus's technique and nickname. The calamity was undeniable proof that the Vitan's Chalice was preposterously dangerous.

Azell remembered how terrifying it had been.

Aunsaurus rarely used the Heaven's Tear Goblet.

In the early days of the war, the human alliance found out the terrifying nature of this technique, so they tried everything to prevent Aunsaurus from completing the technique.

In the early days of the war, Aunsaurus fought against overwhelming number of enemy forces. He used this single technique to almost wipe out a large human alliance army that was 10,000 strong.

After Azell took part in the war, Aunsaurus had also burned a city as a tactical move. It was done to delay the progress of the human alliance forces.

Azell had urged Laura to learn this technique.

'I cannot use the technique properly, because I'm not a magician. However, it would be possible for you.'

When he used the Sun Lightsaber against Reygus, Azell had used a technique to gather sunlight in one spot.

However, the scale of his technique was unbelievably small compared to Aunsaurus' technique. On a clear day, Aunsaurus could gather all the sunlight for his use.

As a magician and a Dragon Demon, Laura could bring out the full potential of the Vitan's Chalice.

She used the Dimensional Distortion over a large area to gather sunlight in her pocket dimension. It wasn't just gathering sunlight. The power of the magic spells engraved inside the Vitan's Chalice would get a massive boost. She would be able to create a strong stream of light and heat.

When the maximum amount of heat and light was gathered in the dimensional pocket, she would open a hole where the power could be emitted outwards.

She could create a one big explosion, or she could freely dissect a battlefield with a heat ray. Laura chose to use the latter strategy.

The unavoidable light mace cut through the mountain, and a massive amount of heat exploded along its path.

Every being in the path of the light had died. The layers of defensive magic was burned away like paper, and even their bodies were turned into ashes.

“...it won’t last over 2 seconds.”

Laura mumbled to herself.

The party hadn’t been able to see the moment when the calamity descended on the ground. The Heaven’s Tear Goblet was released at a predetermined moment, and when it was unleashed, she had immediately moved their party into a separate space.

The only worry was whether the plan was properly disseminated amongst the Guardian Shadows.... Surprisingly, the Guardian Shadows reacted precisely as planned. It was as if they followed the party’s will. As a result, they were able to create the perfect result they had wanted to create.

Unfortunately, there was a problem.

The Heaven’s Tear Goblet was incomplete.

When the battle started, the sun hadn’t come up yet. This was why Laura had to focus the Dimensional Distortion in the far east. Moreover, she hadn’t been able to gather sunlight for long. All the sunlight was used up in 2 seconds.

Azell spoke.

“That should be plenty enough. They’ll be in a state of confusion, so we just have to escape.....”

Koo-goo-goo-goo-goohng!

Suddenly, the pocket dimension shook.

Laura's expression turned pale.

"What is it?"

Something she couldn't understand was happening. Someone was assaulting the pocket dimension she had created. In the past, she had experienced the Vitan's Maze being invaded twice. It was when she had saved Niberis from Azell. The most recent attempt was Kieren coming in to save Niberis in this battle.

'Now that I think about it, Niberis was involved in both attempts.'

Of course, this was completely opposite of what she experience twice before.

The situation right now was entirely different from what happened twice before.

Azell had tracked her down from the other side of the dimensional divide, and Kieren had exploited a weak point before the Vitan's Maze could be completed. This being was trying to break the magical energy forming the dimensional pocket.

The unbelievable part was that the attempt was effective. Laura only knew one person that knew how to do this.

"...Azell. Someone is attempting the same thing you showed before."

Azell had cut the wave of magical energy swirling in midair. It was an absurd skill.

From Laura's perspective, she had no idea how it was possible. When she had asked Azell about it, he gave her this answer.

'It is a skill that is pretty useless in real battle. You can't use this skill in the heat of battle. This is why it is used in ambushes or when one wants to break through a barrier from the outside.'

Azell had reemphasized this fact.

‘When one stretches out one’s senses to the extreme, the surrounding magical energy looks like strands. I’m not a magician, but I know the shape and structure the magical energy needs to take to form a spell. After I focus and assess the spell, I cut the strands.’

‘...this is probably what non-magicians feel when they listen to an explanation from a magician.’

‘That means you don’t know what the hell I’m talking about. I like the expression you just used.’

‘Who else can do this besides you?’

Azell had explained the shortcomings of the skill, yet it was an incredible dangerous technique against a magician. This was why she couldn’t help, but ask the question.

‘The duke can’t do it yet.’

‘Will he be able to do so in the future?’

‘I’m not sure. In the past, there were exactly two people who could use this technique.’

‘Who were they?’

‘It was the old man Croix and the Dragon Demon king Atein.’

‘.....’

...some unknown being was using that exact technique to dispel her pocket dimension.

“Did the king revive already?”

From Laura’s perspective, this was the only possibility that seemed plausible.

When she was still with the Plain of Darkness, they kept saying the king’s revival was near.

Then there was the Dragon Demon General Reygus. He had

become a preposterously strong Undead, and Reygus was still tracking down their party.

In such a situation, Azell had said someone on par with Reygus was approaching them.

In such a situation.....

Kairen spoke to a pale faced Laura.

“Laura, I want you to withdraw the Vitan’s Maze.”

“But.....”

“If we drag this out, it’ll be to our detriment. We will become surrounded. Since we have no idea what is going on outside, we can’t continue putting our trust in a wall that will eventually fall.”

Kairen was cold as he made the decision.

Laura turned to look at Azell, and she dispelled the Vitan’s Maze when he gave a nod.

A suffocating wind immediately assaulted their skin.

Hweeeee.....!

They saw a sight they would have never imagined seeing inside the dimensional pocket.

If things had occurred as planned, heat should have emanated from where the Heaven’s Tear Goblet had impacted. The surrounding should have been burning.

However, the sight in front of them had nothing to do with heat.

Ooh-roo-roo-roong! Ggwah-gwahng!

“A storm.....?”

Laura was amazed as she mumbled to herself.

Thunder was crackling in the sky, and a gale powerful enough to throw people around was swirling around them. Soon, there were harsh raindrops mixed in with the gale.

They were basically in the middle of a storm.

However, the intensity of the storm was quickly dissipating.

The suffocating winds dropped off, and rain started falling harder instead. No, the raindrops that had been carried by the wind was now falling normally.

Shwahhhhh.....

After the gale, a regional shower fell from the sky.

Everyone was amazed by the sudden change.

Azell mumbled his words to himself.

“He’s coming.....”

His expression hardened, and it was a scary sight.

From across the falling rain, someone was approaching them. This being was coming here at a leisurely pace as if he was on a stroll. His Dragon Demon magic was so weak that the members of the party hadn’t felt threatened.

It was directed only at Azell... It was a enormous pressure. It was as if a mountain was pressing down on him.

This was why they couldn’t understand why Azell was so tense.

What was he sensing at that moment?

Koo-roo-roong!

The puzzled Kairen was about to ask Azell a question when a large sound rang out. At the same time, a fierce wave of Dragon Demon magic spread into the surrounding.

“Ooh-ook.....!”

Everyone was taken aback. The suffocating wave of Dragon Demon magic reached them as it resonated.

Ggwah-roo-roong! Ggwah-gwah-gwahng!

A thunder exploded forth.

From a specific point on the ground, a thunder rose into the sky in reverse. For a brief moment, the world was dyed white, and the thunder ripped apart the clouds letting out the torrential rain.

“How can this be.....!”

Kairen was shocked.

As the rain clouds in the sky dispersed from explosion, the rain stopped. The morning sky was clear, and a Dragon Demon male was walking towards them from the east with the sun coming down on him.

“It has been a while..”

The silence that had suffocating the entire battlefield was broken as a solemn voice rang out.

Everyone turned to look at the owner of the voice. It was as if they were mesmerized. When Azell saw his face, his expression turned strange.

“...who are you?”

Chapter 155 - Prophesied Being (1)

1

When he saw the earth-shattering feat in front of his eyes, he thought of a single person.

It was the man that was called ‘The Sword that parts the storm’ Almarick.

He was one of the four Dragon Demon general, and his Dragon weapon, ‘Storm’s Scream’, had a special characteristic that was quite troublesome for Azell.

Almarick was able to control the weather and storms. This meant he could freely control thunder.

This special characteristic was very advantageous to use against large opponents like Dragons, and large armies. It’s effectiveness decreased when it was used in one on one battle. However, Azell’s forte was to create and control thunder to cause confusion amongst his enemies. It was frustrating, since he wouldn’t be able to use one of his strengths.

Almarick was called ‘The Sword that parts the storm’, because he could control the weather to create a localized storm. However, his power didn’t end there. He was also able to disperse the storm.

It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that the feat he had just pulled off was proof that he was Almarick.

However, the one to appear in front of Azell was an unfamiliar old Dragon Majin. He had white hair, and blackish-blue horns. He was an old warrior wearing a heavy armor.

The answer came from Laura.

“Elder.....”

“He’s that elder?”

Azell was surprised.

Laura had talked several times about some unknown elder she had consulted before. She knew that he had lived for a long time. He predated the Dragon Demon war, and she was told he was a being that caused fear and confusion amongst human just by showing his presence.

However, no one in Laura's vicinity knew the true name and identity of the elder. In the past, this was how Laura had described the elder.

He looked like a frail existence, but Laura had speculated that a magical rite had caused him to look like that. In truth, he probably was hiding an incredible power.

The old Dragon Majin spoke.

"I'll have to put up with the hassle of putting on a mask I've taken off once before, but..... Ausaurus' heir had been a companion with whom I could chat with, so I feel the need to give her a formal introduction."

As he spoke those words, he brought his hand towards his face.

Then.... He slowly started ripping away the skin on his face.

It was an unbelievable sight. No matter how one saw it, the mask had looked like his real face, yet he was ripping it away with his bare hand?

At the same time, his appearance started to change.

Yuren was surprised.

"Illusion? I couldn't detect it at all....."

Laura was also surprised. Two high rank magicians had been unable to detect the disguise of the old Dragon Majin.

As the skin on his face was ripped away, his appearance started to distort in small increments. The height and width of his body grew. He now stood tall, and his body had turned imposing. The texture of his horns turned into that of volcanic stones, and his

right eye was dyed red.

Azell spoke his name.

“...you are still alive, Almarick.”

His opponent didn't deny the fact.

“You too, Azell. We should be surprised at each other's survival, but.... Now that we are facing each other, isn't it too obvious?”

Almarick, who had become a legend as one of the four Dragon Demon generals in the Dragon Demon war, grinned.

According to historical records, all four Dragon Demon generals had met their end on the battlefield.

The first one to die was Reygus, and it was thanks to his personality. He had charged into a trap set by the allied forces despite the fact that he had lost a massive amount of blood.

The second to be killed was Baldazark. He was killed in a duel with Azell.

The third to be killed was Aunsaurus. He had lost to Carlos, and while retreating, he had been killed.

The last to die was Almarick. In the final battle, it was known that Duke Croix Nidel had killed him.....

Laura vacantly mumbled to herself.

“Elder was Almarick-nim.....”

“I wasn't in a position where I could reveal my identity so easily. However, nothing I told you before is a lie.”

“I know.”

While Almarick posed as an old Dragon Majin, he had told Laura a lot of stories. She had been surrounded by Aunsaurus tribe, who was filled with madness. The stories he had told her, and the different perspective of the world he offered her had been a big comfort to her.

Still, she had hardened her heart, since she knew she would have to oppose him in the future.

However, she would have never imagined that he was the Dragon Demon general Almarick.

Azell spoke.

“Since you’ve gotten a little bit older, have you decided to be more respectable? Your style have changed a lot.”

Almarick’s outer appearance differed greatly from what he remembered.

At the time, he had been a ferocious looking middle-aged Dragon Demon, who had just popped out from the wild. He had dirty long white hair, and his red eyes had been filled with chaotic murderous intent. He possessed thick horns that had the quality of volcanic stones, and he never wore armor. He had been quite the sight wearing only Dragon leather.

After 220 years had passed, he had tamed his unruly white hair by brushing it backwards. The light within his eye was much more grounded with reason. His outfit was quite fashionable as he wore an all black armor.

The air of being a dangerous beast still remained, but it felt much more restrained than the version Azell remembered. Even how he spoke had softened, so Azell wondered if this person was really Almarick.

‘By looking at the resonance of his Dragon Demon magic, he can’t be someone else.... No, 220 years had passed, so maybe the fact that Reygus’ personality had remained the same is abnormal.’

Suddenly, Almarick’s hand touched his left eye. There was only an ugly scar left there in place of an eye.

Azell knew the origin of that scar. The scar came from the wound he had given Almarick.

“I had to act like an old man in the back room living a free and easy life in retirement. It made me turn out this way. Since I only had one eye left, I took up reading as an hobby.”

“You and reading..... It is an unlikely combination.”

“I think so too. However, I had nothing to do, and I couldn’t go anywhere. This was why I found a hobby that brought pleasure to my mind.”

“Old man Croix said he made sure he ended your life....”

“He was telling the truth. However, a magical rite prepared by the king revived me. The old man had been satisfied with just piercing my heart. He should have destroyed my entire body.”

“Unfortunately, the old man is long dead, so I can’t complain to him about it.”

They said such words in hindsight, but Azell knew Duke Croix Nidel hadn’t been in a situation where he could do so.

By the time he killed Almarick, the duke had also suffered serious injuries. The remaining enemy forces had been ready to die as they charged forward to recover Almarick’s corpse. The duke had been barely able to escape with his life.

Suddenly, Almarick let out a bitter laugh.

“However, I never expected to take off my mask in this fashion. I thought it would happen at a much later date. However, once you took the child.....”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Vitan’s Chalice.”

“Mmm?”

“You probably heard it from this child, but our four Dragon weapons are returned to the Plain of Darkness when they become ownerless. They return through the Great Darkness. Moreover, I’m able to locate all of them.”

“So that is why you guys were able to track us.....”

Azell swallowed a groan. He had wonder how they were able to track them down, and now he knew.

However, something was wrong.

According to Laura, the Great Darkness was under the domain of Queen Aincera. What if the ability to track the Dragon weapons of the Dragon Demon generals wasn't an ability possessed by Queen Aincera? What if it was Almarick's ability, and it was kept secret from the Dragon Demon king worshippers?

‘They didn't reveal such important truths to the younger generation, who are working as their main force. I wonder what problem exists between them.’

The problem between them was much too large to call it friction between two factions. Azell knew there was important circumstances involved in this matter.

Almarick asked him a question.

“Things have devolved to this point, so why isn't Carlos showing himself?”

“...you guys are saying that again. What evidence do you have that Carlos is alive?”

“I'm not sure if you are acting ignorant, or you actually don't know the answer. Azell, you were always great at hiding your true intentions. However, the fact that he hasn't show himself yet makes me think you are telling the truth.”

“The only thing I'm sure is that you guys think Carlos is still alive.”

“There is no reason why I can't tell you the basis for that opinion.”

“What?”

Almarick spoke to the puzzled Azell.

“The king had a divine revelation.”

“Ha. You are going to spout some religious mumbo jumbo? The Almarick I knew wasn’t that kind of a person.”

“However, I’m telling you the truth. When the king’s revival became near, his will came to reside within the Great Darkness. Originally, the king created a groundwork for the four of us to be revive before his revival.”

Atein hadn’t been planning on just reviving himself. He planned on reviving all four Dragon Demon generals. This was why he made a mechanism that would preserve their Dragon weapons.

If their body was preserved at the time of the death, the revival was able to occur at a relatively fast time frame. It took Almarick 50 years before he was revived. As soon as he woke up, he received Atein’s order. He kept his identity hidden.

“We did this, because an enemy of ours could peek into the Great Darkness.”

Almarick knew about Omega. He didn’t know how such an existence could exist, and he didn’t know the exact identity of this being. However, he had known that someone was peeking into the Great Darkness to steal information from them. This was why Almarick had been careful to keep everything hidden.

“Originally, Aunsaurus should have been revived around the same time period as me. However, it didn’t happen.”

This incident had caused great shock to Almarick.

Atein had put great efforts in preparing this plan over a long period of time, yet someone had intervened in the execution of this plan.

It was unbelievable. Atein was the first magician, and his knowledge about magic was transcendent. In terms of battle capability, Baldazark and Ausaurus were said to be comparable to him, but they couldn’t even reach his toe in terms of knowledge of

being a true magician.

So who was able to interfere with Atein's arrangements?

Azell asked a question.

"Are you trying to say Carlos did that?"

"That's right. We had stolen power and knowledge over a long period of time from the humans. This was why we were careful to monitor all the possibilities."

After the Dragon Demon war, the Plain of Darkness kept close eyes on all the high rank magicians, Spirit Order practitioners, and Dragon Arts practitioners. Then they took every opportunity to eliminate them to methodically weaken humanity's power.

"Most of this happened before I was revived.... I was able to read the record engraved in the Great Darkness like a book, and no one truly terrifying had appeared. They were all quite mediocre. The only surprising part was about Baion, who ended the Great Darkness."

At his words, Yuren flinched. However, everyone was focused on Almarick, so no one noticed his reaction.

"On the human side, there had been only one person that was able to mess up what the king arranged. It's Carlos Rizester."

"That's... It does sound like something he could pull off, so I'm not saying it couldn't be true."

"It seems you don't plan on telling me anything until the end. If I kill you here, will he finally show his face?"

"Why don't you test out that theory?"

A thick killing intent started to emanate from Azell and Almarick.

Almarick spoke.

"When I see your weakened state, it reminds me of that time."

“Which incident are you talking about?”

“The time when I lost an eye to you....”

Almarick brushed the scar that had replaced his left eye as he spoke.

Azell knew what he was talking about.

At the time, Almarick had lost an eye in a fight with Azell, and he had suffered heavy wounds. Almarick had to retreat, but he was chased down by Duke Croix Nidel. He had to fight the duke when his wounds hadn't fully healed. He had met his death in that fight.

Now 220 years had passed, and Azell would have to face Almarick with a wounded body that was incapable of fighting properly. Almarick couldn't help, but think about the past.

“This will leave a bad aftertaste.... Still, I have to end you here. I'm not as big of an idiot as Reygus.”

<You know I am listening to you, yet you are able to say such words.>

From a far away location, the ominous voice of an Undead rang out.

Chapter 156 - Prophesied Being (2)

2

On the ridge of a mountain located on the other side, a being shot into the air like an arrow. He was a 3 meters tall giant with black armor surrounding his body. It was the Undead named Reygus.

Koo-koo-koong!

In a flash, he had flown several hundred meters, and he had landed on the ground without decelerating. The ground exploded as it shook. A being made out of flesh and blood would have been pulverized, but Reygus pushed past the dust. He was unharmed.

Azell's party swallowed their breath when they saw him.

'This is the worst.'

Kairen was letting out cold sweat. The plan was to break through the line of Dragon Demon king worshippers before Reygus arrived. However, everything had gone to hell when Almarick had made his appearance.

<How long are you going to yap with your mouth? You used to speak with your sword first rather than your words. It seems you've really mellowed out, while living in retirement as an old man.>

"Since I've already gone through death and revival once, it wasn't a bad way to live. Anyways, I planned on fighting soon even if you hadn't nagged me. It seems I won't be able to find the truth through this conversation."

Almarick raised his sword. It was his Dragon weapon Storm's Scream. He was able to create and cut through storms by using the power of his Dragon weapon.

The sword was unusua inl size. It was one and a half times larger than a normal longsword. Almarick wasn't as big as Reygus, but he

was still over 2 meters tall. It was as if his muscles were chiseled from rock, so his sword was a perfect fit for him.

The sword was the same as the Storm of Blades used by Jeffers Almarick. The blade was transparent like glass. A blue spark soundlessly danced within the blade as it lit up its surrounding.

Reygus mocked Almarick.

<Don't tell me you will be cut down by one strike because you are rusty?>

"I'll shut you up."

<You can try.>

Reygus shrugged his shoulder as he backed off.

Kairen stood in the way of Reygus, and Yuren compressed his magical energy.

Laura was taking care of Kieren and Niberis. Leticia was holding off Jeffers. Therefore, they couldn't retreat quickly. Fortunately, they had killed a large number of magicians supporting Jeffers, so Kairen and Yuren was free to fight Reygus.

However, Reygus tilted his head in puzzlement.

<Do you really plan on fighting with me?>

"We won't let Azell shoulder any more burden."

Kairen was firm with his words.

Reygus' skeleton clacked as he laughed.

<You just told me a great joke. Do you really think I'll interfere in my friend's battle?>

"...you don't plan on doing that? No, you sound as if you plan on just spectating the fight between them."

<So what if I am?>

"Are you being truthful?"

<I'm not some country hick that would interfere with a one on one battle between men.>

“The fact that we are speaking such words does make us sound like outdated country hicks.....”

<Ah, you guys can attack me all at once. I'll complain a little bit, but I won't condemn you for doing so. You guys can do whatever you want.>

“What?”

<I love a one on one fight with a strong person, but I also like breaking through a large number of enemies. Don't you think I'm heroic and manly? That is why I gladly welcome attacks from numerous people.>

“.....”

Kairen was at a loss for words. He heard this bastard died, because he charged into a trap. He was set upon by numerous people. How could his way of thinking remain the same like this?

At the same time, his anger rose.

‘There is a limit on how much you can look down on us!’

Even if Reygus was a legendary figure from the Dragon Demon war, Kairen was also a living legend inside the Rulain Kingdom. Until now, no one had dared to ignore him, yet he was being treated like a small fry by Reygus!

Reygus spoke.

<You guys will really attack me? Will you do so knowing what your actions would precipitate?>

At his words, Kairen came to his senses.

Reygus' taunt wasn't meant to portend their death. There was a different meaning behind his words.

‘The moment we charge the bastard... This cease fire will end.’

Everyone on the battlefield was focused on Azell and Almarick, and a weird cease-fire had developed.

The members of the party and the Guardian Shadows had stopped fighting, and they were just keeping the Dragon Demon king worshippers in check. However, when Kairen engaged Reygus, the paused battle would start once again.

Would that be a boon or a detriment to his party members?

Kairen was working through this problem when Almarick spoke.

“This is only a fleeting form of entertainment for us. You guys should show some patience. Since Reygus and I are already here, it wouldn’t be too bad for you guys if we prolong this.”

It was as he said. The ones they had been most afraid of showing up were already here, so it didn’t matter if more of them showed up. In fact, it might be the opposite. Guardian Shadows were still trickling in one or two at a time, so the delay could be used to their advantage.

Almarick took one step forward.

“Well, Azell, shall we exchange a light greeting?”

Kwahng!

Afterwards, two puppets appeared from between Azell and Almarick. An explosive sound rang out.

They were clones. Both Azell and Almarick made clones that possessed substance as they clashed.

Then.....

“How many are there?”

Kairen swallowed his breath.

It wasn’t just him. Everyone were at a loss of words by the sight unfolding in front of them.

As the light dispersed, Azell and Almarick charged towards each

other.

It wasn't just a single location. The clashes between the clones were occurring all over the place, and simultaneous sounds of explosions rang out.

In the Dragon Arts, it was called Incarnation. However, Azell's ultimate form of this technique was called the Dance of the Shadows.

Magical energy was used to change the attribute of the clones in a free flowing manner. This was why the clones could fight as if they were real. The clones repeatedly switched between their energy form to cross space, and they solidified to battle each other.

It really was an unbelievable sight.

How could this be called a one on one fight.

Even during the Dragon Demon war, Azell and Almarick had been the only ones able to control their clones to this degree. Even the Dragon Demon king Atein couldn't follow them in terms of manipulating clones.

Suddenly, Almarick spoke.

"As expected, I'm inferior in terms of using this tactic. You look as if you are about to fall over, yet you are able to do all this?"

Azell was superior in using the clones.

Almarick's clone kept increasing one or two at a time, but it capped out at 16. Azell's clones continued to grow as they attacked Almarick's clones together.

"Koohk....."

Azell was letting out cold sweat.

His real body hadn't moved an inch. His Dragon Maken and the clones were the ones fighting the battle, but he felt exquisite pain wash over him. His heart was racing, and he vibrated his vessels and arteries to increase his magical energy. It reached a point

where his body became too messed. It was unbearable.

‘No. He still hasn’t started in earnest, yet I.....’

From outside looking in, it looked like an earth-shattering battle. However, it was merely a light greeting being exchanged from the perspective of Azell and Almarick. It was merely a reconnoitering skirmish.

He was able to fight evenly using his clone technique, but he wouldn’t be able to do anything if Almarick himself joined the fight.

Moreover, it didn’t take them too long to reach that point.

“You’ve gotten better from the version I remember. However, you’ve always been a human that evolved at an abnormally fast pace.”

In terms of battling with clones, Almarick was at a disadvantage. Azell had more clones, and he was using battle tactics to destroy Almarick’s clones one by one.

In the end, Almarick moved.

In a flash, he used Instantaneous movement to swing his sword towards Azell.

Ooh-roo-roo-roong.....!

When Almarick received the attack from Azell’s clone, the sound of a thunderclap erupted from within the clear blade. The thunder that had been dancing silently started to burn. It was blinding.

Ggwah-gwah-gwahng!

The thunder erupted as it tried to rip Azell’s clones into pieces.

Azell had predicted his attack, so he changed the attribute of his magical energy into thunder.

However.....

“You made such a basic mistake.”

A cold voice rang out, and Azell's clones... To be precise, the magical energy of thunder forming Azell's clones were eaten by Almarick.

“Koohk.....!”

Azell groaned.

The Storm's Scream had dominion over thunder. In terms of control over thunder, Almarick's sword was superior compared to the Sky Splitter. It was impossible even for Azell to wrestle control away from him.

“S...shit.....!”

His vision blinked out for a moment as Azell fell to one knee. It was the backlash from having the magical energy under his control ripped away from him. He couldn't maintain his balance.

Almarick used the moment when his concentration lapsed to ruthlessly push his way towards Azell.

“This is boring. Is it really going to end like this?”

The sword surrounded by thunder swung towards Azell's neck.

It had happened so suddenly that no one had the chance to intervene. The party members were about to yell in surprise.

Light exploded.

It wasn't thunder. The swirling light expanded, and Almarick was flung away. He let out a ferocious laugh.

“I expected at least this much even if you are dying.”

There wasn't a single trace of the thunder that had surrounded Almarick as he retreated. As the light dispersed, Azell's form was revealed. He spoke as cold sweat ran down his body.

“I thought you were caught.....”

“I knew you wouldn't be taken down in such a disappointing manner. I'm not arrogant enough to think that would happen.”

Azell had purposefully created an opening as he invited Almarick to jump into a trap.

When Almarick tried to swing his final blow, he created another clone to take the blow for him, and at the same time, he prepared a technique that would be catalyzed by his clone being destroyed.

‘Thunder Eater.’

A portion of the thunder emitted by Almarick was sucked into the clone. It was converted into light before it exploded.

It was an unbelievable technique that only Azell could use. He was the only one able to use such a technique with high degree of difficulty through his clones.

However, Almarick hadn’t put down his defense. The trap dug by Azell couldn’t even leave behind a scratch on Almarick.

“Let’s end our greeting here. Shall we start this for real?”

As he spoke such words, thunder erupted from the horn that looked like volcanic rocks. It joined with the thunder being emitted by the Dragon weapon, and it created strong winds. It felt as if it would sweep away everything.

Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah!

The storm and the thunder threatened Azell at the same time, and all of Almarick’s clones turned into thunder as they charged forward. Azell, who had a numerical advantage, started to be pushed backwards.

“This is quite unfortunate. You aren’t able to have a proper clone fight with such magical energy. It doesn’t matter that there are a lot of them. They are garbage!”

Almarick gave a declaration.

His Dragon Demon magic was on par with what he had during the Dragon Demon war. It was so overwhelming that no one would measure up to him in this place.

Azell's magical energy wasn't very vary far off from the magical energy he possessed during the Dragon Demon war. However, his body wasn't whole, so he could barely use half his skills.

Azell's clones were being destroyed one by one. There were a lot of them, but each of Almarick's clone were stronger than his.

'Sky Splitter, please endure.....!'

Even the Sky Splitter wasn't its normal self.

Normally, it was something that couldn't be brought out unless the vessel holding the Dragon Majin was whole. However, he had pushed himself over the limit against Reygus, and afterwards, he hadn't recovered his Dragon Demon magic fully. As the owner, Azell's status was a mess right now.

In the end, the defense of the clones were broken, and the Sky Splitter in its light form was dominated by the storm and thunder emitted by the Storm's Scream.

"Koo-ahk.....!"

Azell coughed out blood as he fell over.

"Azell!"

Kairen ran forward. Almarick had been about to apply the final blow when Kairen blocked it.

Almarick let out a laugh.

"Your bravery is admirable."

He pushed aside Kairen, and he spoke in a haughty manner.

"I want my allies to hear me! Don't interfere. They are great candidates that I can use to rehab my skills."

"You bastard. You were killed and revived once, yet you are holding up your head so high!"

"You are a brat without a Dragon weapon. I have no reason to be afraid of you even if you attack me by the bushel. I'll let you attack

me until your heart's content.”

As if by illusion, someone appeared behind him. Leticia had suppressed her presence to approached him, and she stabbed with her cross spear.

“The strong doesn't turn away from arrogance. The strong accepts it.”

However, Almarick already knew she had approached him. A clone wrapped up in thunder flew in to block her spear as Almarick spoke.

“Your stance is good. I like the fact that you do not hesitate.”

Another clone appeared next to her as it attacked. When Leticia became startled, a beam of light flew in as it exploded.

Kwah-kwah-kwahng!

“It seems you owe me a life debt?”

It was Yuren. Leticia snorted when faced with the grinning Yuren.

“Don't you have a lot of debt you haven't paid off against me? This won't even cover the interest that you've accrued.”

“You are being miserly.”

When Yuren laughed in a playful manner, Almarick's expression turned peculiar.

“Hmm. You are the brat that betrayed us by claiming that you are a descendant of Carlos. You really do look like Carlos. I'm well aware that humans resemble their ancestors. Still, it feels weird seeing someone with a similar face as him.”

“Oh, it is an honor to be spoken in such a way by the legendary Dragon Demon general. In return, I will no longer worry about the consequences.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“This is what I mean.”

Yuren’s brown hair whipped around fiercely as the unbelievably ominous magical energy spread into the surrounding. His slate gray eyes were dyed red, and black smoke gathered at his back. It looked as if evil spirits were congregating behind him.

He was calling forth a demon. He wasn’t thinking about the consequences of his actions.

It caught Almarick’s eye.

“Interesting. The fact that you are able to do this in a battle without prior preparation is quite surprising.”

Instead of answering with words, Yuren answered with his magic. His magical energy increased exponentially, and he unleashed a powerful cursed flame.

Hwahhhhhk!

In a flash, the violent flames engulfed the surrounding, but the flames didn’t reach Almarick. The storm he had brought forth was perfectly sealing off the curse and the heat. At the same time, Almarick’s clones aimed for Yuren.

As if he had been waiting for this, he let loose the magic spells he had prepared, but.....

“The magic spells itself is quite good. However, you are far away from having the depth of power to use such spells..”

The magic dumbfoundedly just passed through Almarick’s clones.

Yuren’s eyes widened. He knew what this phenomenon meant through Azell.

‘Shit! He knows what I’m going to do!’

Yuren had waited for Almarick’s clones to attack, and he had shot a beam of light towards them. However, Almarick changed the attribute making up the clones into light, and he let the attack

flow off his clones. Then he reformed them.

Before he could prepare his next magic spell, the clone's sword struck out toward Yuren.

Leticia didn't even have the chance to intervene. Yuren was sure he was dead.

Ooohng.....!

In the next moment, his surrounding changed.

Almarick's clone realized a beat too late that he had his back towards Yuren. As if by instinct, he let out another attack.

Puh-uh-ung!

A sound of an explosion rang out, and Almarick's clone was destroyed.

Almarick spoke from beyond the explosion.

"It seems you have firmed your resolve."

"...yes, elder."

It was Laura. She had used Dimensional Distortion to save Yuren.

"We are enemies now."

"That's right."

He nodded his head as Almarick continued to speak.

"I want you to drag out every ounce of power you have when you come at me. If you are going to die, don't leave any regret behind."

After he said his words in an arrogant manner, he relentlessly attack like a storm.

Chapter 157 - Prophesied Being (3)

3

As the storm raged and the thunder roared, numerous clones switched between being illusory and real as they attacked the party.

The only thing that was definite was the fact that it was a four on one battle.

In truth, there was only one real body, yet 16 clones were attacking the party.

When Almarick fought Azell, he had only used clones that had substance. Now that he was adding in illusory clones, so they couldn't even count how many there were.

After clashing several dozen times with the Storm's Scream, Kairen's Dragon sword was broken.

The blade of thunder pierced Leticia's abdomen.

The swirling gale slammed Yuren into the rock face.

Then.....

"This is it."

The last one to kneel was Laura.

"Ha-ahk, ha-ah.... Ah....."

Laura was breathing heavily, and the light from the Vitan's Chalice dispersed. Then her body fell to the floor.

She had used all the techniques she could use with the Vitan's Chalice. If it wasn't for her, this battle would have ended long ago.

However, they were of no match to Almarick. The four of them had used all their might for a joint attack, but they couldn't even harm the tip of his hair. It was a shameful defeat.

The Dragon Demon king worshippers were at a loss for words.

Niberis and Kieren was completely intimidated as they watched the sight.

‘Is this the might of the Dragon Demon generals?’

They had witnessed it when Reygus had used his full power to fight Azell. Their power was on a different level. The Dragon Demon King worshippers felt it in their bones as to why these figures had become legends.

They also understood why the Aunsaurus tribe had used such evil methods to create an outstanding heir.

Niberis, Kieren and Jeffers were descended from noble bloodline, and they possessed potential that matched up with said bloodline. The Dragon Demon magic they were born with were clearly superior to other people.

However...

They couldn't hold a candle to the Dragon Demon generals, who were their ancestors. The Aunsaurus family probably knew how incredible an existence the Dragon Demon generals were. This was why they weren't satisfied with naturally born heirs, and this was why they put their hands on the forbidden methods. In some ways, their actions were a natural consequence of knowing the might of the Dragon Demon generals. It made the Dragon Demon king worshippers have such thoughts.

Suddenly, Reygus spoke.

<If our side hadn't done such needless act, we might have had some pretty scary enemies.>

“I've made the same assessment as you. This guy is special. He is quite skilled. I almost feel bad for him that he doesn't have a proper Dragon weapon.”

Almarick let out a bitter laugh as he looked at the fallen Kairen, who was a bloody mess. The one that put up the best fight amongst the party was Laura, but if one was talking purely about how much

energy one possessed, Kairen had the most. Kairen was the only one Almarick thought was a waste.

“It is a shame that his talent will be for naught. I can see why our side considered him to be a subject of caution.”

It happened at that moment.

「No.....」

「We won't let you.....」

「Do as.....」

「You like.....!」

The Guardian Shadows had been observing the battle, but they now ran forward.

At the same time, the paused battle started to move again. The Dragon Demon king worshippers blocked the path of the Guardian Shadows, and they fought.

The Guardian Shadows didn't care about the progress of the battle. They ignored all else as they charged towards Almarick.

Suddenly, Almarick spoke.

“You are pitiful souls of the dead. So what do you think you can accomplish here?”

The Guardian Shadows were unable to get close to Almarick. He was surrounded by the power of storm and thunder. Any Guardian Shadows that approached him were sent flying.

Azell stood up.

He could no longer his psychokinesis, since he lacked magical energy. He used his Dragon Majin as a cane to stand up. Almarick lamented as he spoke.

“So does this mean you want to die on your feet?”

“Maybe.....”

Azell smirked.

“I just....don’t like lying down.....”

“That’s the spirit. You are our old foe. I recognize the feats you were able to accomplish, so I will show some mercy. After you and your companions are dead, I promise not to insult you to the envoy of death. ”

“Hahaha... I’m so thankful...that tears are coming out.....”

The Guardian Shadows enclosed around Azell. They were prepared for death.... No, these spirits had already died. They were beings that endlessly ruminated on their hate, and now they were showing a resolve that was considered to be transcendent.

Almarick was in wonders when he approached them.

“He is more important than your hate towards us?”

In the past 50 year, Almarick had to hide his identity, but he was able to observe the Guardian Shadows through the Great Darkness.

They were the personification of hate, and the Dragon Demon king worshippers were the cause of their creation. The Dragon Demon king worshipers had overturned the world through malice and ambition, and as a result, the Guardian Shadows had appeared as an antagonistic force.

They always moved based on their hate and murderous intent.

They didn't converse or negotiate. They just sought the destruction of the Dragon Demon king worshippers. They were irrational beings made out of hate.

However, at this moment, they had risen above their hate, and they were trying to protect Azell. Almarick couldn’t help, but ask for the reason behind their action.

“Why? Why are you moving past the driving force that supports your existence? Why are you putting the protection of Azell above it?”

「Hope.....」

“Did you say hope?”

It was as if he had heard a bad joke. They were crazed beings that had only wanted the destruction of their foes, yet they were talking about hope?

「Everyone is gone.....」

「Taken.....」

「Still, there is one light left.....」

“Unexpectedly, you guys are poets. Azell is your hope. As expected, did Carlos make you guys? That still doesn’t explain why he won’t show up even now....”

It happened at that moment.

Murderous intent stretched out from far away, and it agitated Almarick’s senses. Then.....

Something he couldn’t see pierced through Almarick’s barrier.

“A sniper? From where?”

Almarick was surprised. He had barely been able to dodge before the arrow had hit him, but his shoulder armor had been ripped away. It wasn’t as if his shoulder armor had been smashed into pieces. It was a wound akin to a wild beast being cut by a piece of paper.

Of course, Almarick was using gaze detection technique, so he knew someone was aiming at him in an attempt to snipe him. Even if one was able to hide one’s gaze, one would have to emit killing intent right before attacking, so Almarick would have known the exact moment.....

It was strange as another arrow tried to snipe him.

He dodged it again. He spread his thunder to detect the attack. It allowed him to react at lightning speed.

Still, it was very close. The arrows were coming in at a speed several times the speed of sound, and he couldn't sense the arrows until it touched his field made from thunder.

“Is this perhaps.....”

Almarick knew of this attack. His gaze naturally headed towards Azell.

In the past, there had been a bow that was able to shoot invisible magical arrows. These arrows couldn't be traced. It had no presense, and its true form couldn't be discerned. It was a nightmare of a sniper's weapon that couldn't be recreated with any other magic. That bow was made by.....

Azell mumbled in surprise.

“...Underworld Ruler's Marksman.....?”

Its presence hadn't been seen in this current era.

The Dragon weapon got its nickname from the arrows that seem to fly in from the netherworld.

It was forgotten in history, but many officers of the Dragon Demon king's army was taken down by this weapon. It was the Dragon weapon of the Blood and Iron knight. Elleolom was a female knight, and she had almost killed Dragon Demon general Baldazark. When her allies were being overwhelmed, she had jumped in to save them by taking on Baldazark. Both Elleolom and Baldazark suffered serious injuries in that battle. They were both at the brink of death.

In the end, she never recovered from her injuries, and she had died. Her Dragon weapon was inherited by one person.

It was inherited by the hero, who would one day kill the Dragon Demon king Atein. It was given to Azell Karzark.

“Mmmm.....!”

The magic arrows that was several times faster than the speed of

sound kept flying in. They kept penetrating Almarick's defense. Almarick had no choice, but to retreat. The Guardian Shadows took this opportunity to attack Almarick from all sides.

Almarick spoke.

“Reygus.”

<I think I know what you want to say to me, but.....>

Reygus was showing signs of distress. Almarick was puzzled, but he became surprised when Reygus' magical energy started to shrink rapidly.

“Is it that the bastard from before?”

<I believe so.>

From afar, Balseru was watching Reygus with his eyes, which held a mysterious power.

Almarick clicked his tongue.

“That means the backbone of the Guardian Shadows are coming here. However, he don't have any information regarding them possessing the Underworld Ruler's Marksman.....”

The Guardian Shadows were like raging waves as they rushed towards Almarick and Reygus.

They were above the restraints of the material world. They didn't bump into each other, and they didn't run past each others. This meant an overwhelming number of enemies were rushing towards them in concert. It was such an overwhelming number of attackers that it was hard to see one's surrounding. The Guardian Shadows didn't care if they were ripped apart by storm and thunder as they charged forward.

On top of that, Almarick and Reygus were pinned down by the continuous sniping by the Underworld Ruler's Marksman. The several thousand Guardian Shadows gathered in one place, and they ignored everything on the battlefield to execute a suicide

attack.

Even the almighty Almarick and Reygus were being pushed back.
Moreover.....

Puh-puh-puhng! Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwahng!

Explosions rang out on various parts of the battlefield.

It was a wave of magic energy that had a strong scent of Dragon Demon magic. A golden colored light that was the size of a child's fist was flying around. It was a construct made out of magical energy. Every time it hit a magic spell it created a strong magical backlash. It caused the magicians to fall over.

Azell mumbled to himself as he was struck dumb.

“...Box of Hate?”

There was a man that had lost the people he loved through Dragon Demon king Atein's magic. He lost his home, and he had even lost his homeland.

His name was Jis, and he had fought the Dragon Demon king's army using the flames of vengeance that burned within him.

He had willingly participated in the Dragon Slayer's Ritual to move past the limitation of being a human, and he realized a truth about himself. He hated magic itself. The Dragon Demon king Atein was the first Dragon Demon, and he was the progenitor of magic. Jis hated Atein, and the magic that created such supernatural destruction. This hate and anger was tempered to create a Dragon weapon. It was called the Box of Hate.

This Dragon weapon was able to obstruct the magic spells of enemies in a limited region, yet one's allies could use magic freely in this space. It created a cheat-like situation. This made the allied forces very cautious in how they deployed Jis. However, there came a time when he was deployed as a winning gambit against Almarick and Reygus. Jis had fought without a care for his body.

After a fierce attack, his hate stained life came to an end.

‘My body may perish, but my hate will never die.’

Jis left behind his will, and he passed on his Dragon weapon to Azell. Moreover, the Box of Hate had a crucial role in him defeating Baldazark and Atein. Azell was able to fulfill Jis’ dream of revenge.

“...I think that is its name.”

Suddenly, a sharp female voice was heard from Azell’s side.

She was able to approach him without revealing her presence. She was a woman in her late 30s with long blond hair and cold features. She spoke as she gazed at Azell.

“I’ve never been able to call it by its name. Azell-nim will be able to call it by its name from now on whenever you need it.”

“You are.....?”

“I am the Keeper of Prophecy Iota. Please save your breath. Everyone will be here soon.”

When she said everyone, who was she referring to?

Soon, he was able to learn the answer to the question.

Chapter 158 - Prophesied Being (4)

4

Several humans appeared one after another as they pierced through the explosions and the thundering noises.

Balseru, who usually had his eyes closed, had his eyes opened as he glared at Reygus.

Jares appeared next with a bashful smile on his face.

Then others that weren't known to Azell appeared.

An average looking girl with freckles appeared. Her blonde hair was split into two ponytails. It was Omega. She fidgeted as if she was embarrassed.

An old Dragon Majin with a fierce looking face appeared as he cleared his throat.

Then a middle-aged woman walked forth. She had a kind smile on her face.

A very thin man wearing raggedy monk's robe appeared next. The color of the robe had been faded away, and he was carrying a book.

Next to appear was a youth with sharp eyes that was reminiscent of a wild beast.

"It has been awhile, Azell-nim. Ah, it does feel awkward calling you that."

The last one to show up was the youth called Leone. He used to have a perpetual smile that made his face look like a mask.

However, his laughter was different from before. He was laughing shyly. Leone's face wasn't like that of a mask. His expression made him look like a living person.

<Hmm. I understand what you all are feeling right now, but we

are going through hell fighting right now. Could you keep it short?
>

The Undead Theta was floating in midair as he fired his magic spells indiscriminately.

It wasn't just him. The Undeads that had fought alongside the Keepers of Prophecy across the continent were fighting all over the battlefield.

Leone spoke.

"We will do so. However, give us a little... At the very least, please allow each of us time to confess to him."

<Since this will be the last of your willful behavior, I will allow it.>

Theta elegantly bowed towards them as he flew towards the battlefield.

Azell dumbfoundedly looked at the Keepers of Prophecy surrounding him.

He was the prophesied person they had been waiting for.

Azell already knew this. However, he had had no idea about the specific meaning behind such a designation. He also had no idea why they had come here.

The Keepers of the Prophecy looked at each other. There was an awkward silence as they hesitated. Jares cleared his throat as he took a step forward.

"Koo-hmmm. First....."

He was the one that had left the worst impression on Azell. However, unlike before he spoke in a respectful and dignified manner.

"I want to apologize for my previous rudeness, Azell Karzark. You are our great progenitor."

“...what?”

For a moment, Azell thought he had heard wrong. However, there was endless affection and respect for Azell in Jares’ eyes.

“When the land of Liesah fell to the enemy, you fought four days and night by yourself to protect the town. There was a maiden, who risked her life to deliver a cup of water to you. Her name was Katrina Aisa.”

Azell’s eyes widened. That did happen. She was the second daughter of the Count of Liesah, who was in charge of the region. She had been a maiden that had been highly intelligent and brave.

Jares spoke.

“I’m her descendent. To be precise, a child was conceived on that one night you spent with her, and that child grew up to lead the family. He had offsprings.... The bloodline was continued until I was born.”

“This is.....”

Azell was struck dumb.

It had been that kind of an era. No one knew if they would be able to greet the next day. This was why everyone had been focused on the present, and they acted out on the passion of the moment. This was why Azell had shared a lot of one night stands with many women.

Officially, Azell didn’t have any children. He had adopted many children, but none of them had been of his blood.

However, Azell had descendants he hadn’t known about.

“It was the same for my grandmother, and the children she sired. I am proud to be your descendant. Since we were born of your blood, even as we took on the mission born of hate..... We were able to preserve the keys to our final hope. Now we can return them to you.”

Jares took Azell's hand, and he put his lips to the back of his hand. In a flash, a light erupted from the two of them as something was absorbed into Azell's body.

It was a Dragon weapon.

‘Chain of the Earth Dragon?’

It was one of the 12 Dragon weapons he had used during the Dragon Demon war.

In front of the surprised Azell, Jares gave a reverent bow as he express his respects towards Azell. Jares retreated towards the back before Azell could say anything. Iota switched places with Jares, and she opened her mouth.

“In the Delsern region, there was a young woman named Aelin. She was captured by Orc bandits, and she was kept as their plaything. She had wanted to die everyday as she was violated.”

It was when Azell was still a common knight. Azell kept changing his main residence as he helped the towns that didn't have the power to protect themselves. He had killed the bandit groups that had preyed on these towns. In the process, he was able to free slaves that were being exploited. Amongst these slaves, there had been a young woman, who clung to him as she cried.

“Her only wish was to have your child, and she had her wish. The story of our proud ancestors were passed down our line, and I was born. I consider myself fortunate that I was able to take on this role, since I was born as your descendant. I will now return this to you.”

The Dragon weapon called Box of Hate was returned to Azell.

Azell looked at them as if he was mesmerized. They were still in a desperate situation, but now everything didn't seemed surreal.

Half of Azell's mind was lost as each Keepers of the Prophecy told their confession. They told him about their ancestors.

There was the heroine that took up the sword in revenge when she lost her husband.

There was the woman that had been fated to be changed into a monster through a black magic experiment. He had saved her.

Then there was the woman.....

“We are all your descendants.”

They were all descendants of the women that had fallen in love with Azell when he had shown them kindness.

Their existence hadn't been known to the world, but they were all descendants of the children he had out of wedlock. They were of Azell's bloodline. They were Azell's descendants, and at the same time, they had lost everything to the Dragon Demon king worshippers. They held a grudge that couldn't be washed away against the Dragon Demon king worshippers, so they were able to become Guardian Shadows. Moreover, they had the prerequisite to be able to carry out the most important mission.

Azell would wake up one day, so they had to act as the vessels that would safely store his Dragon weapons.

“...it seems you have the charm of a bad boy.”

Balseru laughed as he spoke. He was still suppressing Reygus, so he wasn't able to turn to look at Azell.

“Our grandmothers carried your children, yet they didn't notify you. Some were satisfied with just having the child, and some didn't want to burden you with the news when you were carrying out such a big task for the world. If others found out their reasons for not doing so, they would have pointed their fingers at the idiocy of their reasonings.”

“.....”

When it was framed that way, Azell had sired children all over the place, yet he hadn't taken responsibility for any of them. He

was the bad guy.

‘No, it isn’t like that.....’

They were in a desperate situation right now, but Azell was swept up in an indescribable feeling. He wanted to give some kind of excuse, but if he did, he would be branded as the worst human trash.

“You probably have many more descendants out there besides us. However, we are the only ones gathered here.”

Balseru retreated a step backwards as he placed a hand on Azell’s shoulder. The Dragon weapon he had kept safe was transferred to Azell.

“I’m very sorry that we weren’t able to preserve all twelve. However, we did our best. I hope you are thankful for our efforts.”

At last, Leone stepped in front of Azell.

“Mmm. Balseru’s words are correct, but.... It isn’t as if there isn’t something that could be said in your defense.”

Azell wanted to ask what he meant. However, he was having a hard time saying anything. His mouth just opened and closed. Leone spoke in a playful manner towards Azell.

“Do you remember the maiden named Lizara you met in the Raroon region?”

Of course, he remembered her.

She was the daughter of a provincial lord. Her sister had been raped when the rear of the Dragon Demon king’s army pillaged her town. Her unni had taken her own life afterwards. Lizara had wanted revenge for her unni, so she had used all her remaining money to hire mercenaries. However, as soon as they travelled towards a region that was sparse in population, the mercenaries changed their attitudes towards her. They had been plotting to turn on her. They were going to sell her in the black markets as a

slave.

Azell possessed supernatural senses, so he had heard them whisper their plot to each other. Azell stealthily chased after them, and he had saved her before the plot could come to fruition. However, when Carlos and Azell saw Lizara shed tears, they decided to help her get her revenge. At the time, Azell couldn't forget what Carlos had said to him.

‘I worked like a dog alongside you, yet good things only happen to you.....’

After they finished their revenge, Lizara discretely spent some good times with Azell. It was, because Carlos had a bit up a messed up personality. Carlos was cold, and he spoke cruel words as if it was nothing. This was why Liza had been afraid of him. However, that didn't matter anymore now.

Leone spoke.

“She was with child, but she didn't have any methods of finding you thanks to the war.”

It was a wall that all women pregnant with Azell's children faced.

“When the war ended, her child was still too young, so she couldn't travel far.”

Liza had wanted to notify Azell of the birth of his child, and she wanted to entrust the child to him. However, Azell lived far away at the County of Karzark. She had no choice, but to wait for the child to grow up until the child could survive such a long journey.

“However, you went missing two years after the Dragon Demon war ended.”

“.....”

That had been the biggest problem.

During the war, the women didn't dare to search for him. When they tried to go see him after the war ended, he had gone

missing....

From Azell's perspective, he would have taken responsibility if the women had shown up at his doorsteps with his children. However, he couldn't do so thanks to Atein's curse.

"However, you left the County of Karark under the stewardship of Archmage Carlos until your adopted children came of age. This was why he was able to recognize Liza, and he confirmed that the child was yours. This was how they became a part of your family."

Liza was the daughter of a provincial lord, but she had lost everything during the Dragon Demon war. That was why she joined the County of Karzar with her son. She lived there until her life concluded.

This wasn't known to many outside the County of Karzark, but according to memories of his ancestors he had inherited, there had been many cases like that.

"However, when Liza's son came of age, he had a falling out with her. This was why he rejected the life of living within the County of Karzark, and he went out into the world."

Moreover, such stories hadn't been rare. Carlos had been relatively good about directing the traffic, but Azell was missing. Azell was supposed to be the pillar of this community, yet he was considered to be missing. He was as good as dead to them. Moreover, Azell had adopted too many children. There were a lot of conflicts and confusions amongst the people living there. For every one that found a home in the County of Karzark, another went out into the world to seek new possibilities.

This was why the Dragon Demon king worshippers were able to slaughter everyone inside the County of Karzark, yet Azell's bloodline had been able to survive and appear in this place.

Balseru smiled as he added his own words.

"In truth, it was the same for my ancestors too."

“Oooh.....”

For a moment, Azell wanted to smack him. He had made Azell look like human trash, then he revealed the truth later on. All the Keepers of Prophecy looked relieved once they unloaded their burdens.

“Anyways, we are thankful to you.”

Leone let out a playful laugh. His laugh was unlike the ones Azell had heard before. It was a laughter that went well with his youthful look.

“We had already lost everything. Our lives had ended. We often complained as to the reason why our memories were taken.... Now we know.”

They had recovered all their lost memories. No, they had also gained the memories of their ancestors, so they had arrived at an understanding now.

The creator of the Guardian Shadows had been worried about the Keepers of Prophecy falling into enemy hands.

If it was Atein’s descendants, they probably knew of a way to analyze the the Guardian Shadow’s system if they could get a hold of the memories within the Keepers of the Prophecy. This was why they were left with the knowledge of their mission. They were kept in ignorance. It was done to protect the truth.

Leone wondered if that was the correct decision or if the creator had been overly cautious.

Still, Leone didn’t resent the choice that had been made for them. Several Keepers of Prophecy had fallen to their enemies, yet no secrets had been revealed. Now the day when their purpose would be realized had arrived.

After finishing his story, Leone smiled radiantly.

“We’ll leave the rest to you. I hope you are able to bring about the

prophecy.”

The Dragon weapon in Leone’s care was transferred to Azell.

‘Ah.....’

When he inherited nine Dragon weapons, the sight in front of Azell’s eyes blurred. Azell realized this wasn’t a natural phenomenon. Leone had used some method to put him to sleep.

“Moreover, you might consider it as us whining, but.... We have one little request.”

Leone spoke towards the faltering Azell.

“Please don’t forget about us.”

“Wait a moment.....”

Azell tried to grab Leone with his hand.

However, Leone sidestepped his hand as he turned away from Azell. Each Keepers of Prophecy paid respects to him before they receded into the distance.

‘Wait.....’

Azell wanted to hold onto them, yet he could no longer maintain his consciousness.

The ground shook from the explosion, and loud sounds washed over him. However, his consciousness kept falling into the darkness.

‘...please don’t forget about us.’

Leone’s last words rang in his ears as Azell slumped to the ground.

Chapter 159 - Inherited Resolution (1)

1

He was having a dream.

He had never been there before, and he was aware of that fact. However, it was a dream where he was able to meet someone that looked very familiar to him.

It was a space where the light reflected off the surface of the water. The reflected light danced on the wall. Normally, it was supposed to be an underground space where no light should be able to reach the place. However, the magical light that was emitted in the middle, and it was creating a wondrous sight.

<You've finally reached this point, Azell.> He knew this person better than anyone, yet his voice sounded so foreign. He spoke towards Azell.

It was a very bleak voice. It was as if the deepest darkness below had been squeezed to create this voice. It felt as if his lifespan shortened by listening to this voice. It sounded similar to the voice of an Undead, but it was a voice that incited a more basic fear from the living.

Azell looked at the owner of the voice.

Water had gathered at a corner of the space. There were fragments of light dancing above the water as if they were fireflies dancing in the summer night. The light was so faint that it was as if it was about to be eaten by the darkness. However, the fragments of light continued to be reflected as the beautiful dim light remained.

In the middle of it all, there was a silhouette surrounded by darkness.

Fragments of light was dancing around him, yet his face couldn't be seen. It wasn't, because of the darkness cast by the worn out

hood. It was probably caused by the ominous energy surrounding his body.

His body was wrapped in a ragged robe, and something was planted deep in his chest. The end was rounded, and it was embedded with a clear gem. The wooden staff was pierced through his chest as a quiet darkness emanated from it.

There was a rectangular pillar made out of silver erected behind him. Black chains were tying him to the silver pillar, and darkness crawled up the surface of the pillar in the shape of letters. It was a bizarre sight.

Azell called out to him.

“Carlos.....”

He was the magician that has founded the Guardian Shadows. He was Azell’s closest friend Carlos.

Carlos laughed. An eccentric laugh rang out. It sounded completely different from his previous laughter.

<You are able to recognize me when I’ve turned out like this. I’m moved by it.> “I also know that I’m not seeing you in reality right now.”

<Yes, this is a message I left within them.> “Is this like the thought construct you left behind when I woke up?”

<I created this to deliver a more important message. Moreover, the conversation you have with this thought construct will be delivered to you in reality.> “What message?”

<I am at the sacred mountain of Laus.>

Laus was the highest mountain on the continent. It was located northeast of the continent, and it was part of the Atisan mountain range. This mountain range was like a natural barrier that bisected the mountain range of Darkness and the Demon lands of Albatan.

<You should come there to meet me, Azell. I have the final

key.....> “I have a mountain of questions I want to ask you.... I’m guessing I don’t have much time?”

<Yes, I didn’t give this thought construct much time.> “I can see from your state that you didn’t endure the ravages of time with a living body. Still, I never expected the Dragon Demon king worshippers to get this right. You were able to create the Guardian Shadows with such a body. Did you do it as a pre-emptive move to block the revival of Atein and the Dragon Demon generals?”

<In truth, I hadn’t thought that far ahead.....> Carlos cackled as he laughed.

<I experienced something unexpected in my latter years in life. Azell, the world faced two very serious threats after you died.> “Do you mean the fall of the empire?”

<I’m not talking about such worldly problems. Of course, that was a very big event, but that occurred after I retreated from the forefront of history.> The empire broke apart after Carlos was officially declared dead.

<Calamities that threatened the existence of our races had appeared. The funny thing about it was the fact that they were released, because Atein was killed.> “What do you mean?”

<It means Atein had fought calamities that would have wiped out the population of the world in the past, and he had sealed them. As I’ve told you before, Atein and the Dragon Demon generals were once called heroes that save the world.> “Mmmm.....”

Azell furrowed his brows. It was a truth that had been revealed when Carlos dug into the past of Atein. Whether it was the past or present, Azell was having a hard time accepting it as truth.

<Somehow, I was able to block those two calamities, but I ended up like this. I wasn’t capable of stopping any troubles that occurred afterwards.> “Did this occur during the time when your death was officially recorded?”

<That's right. I did die in some fashion.>

Carlos shrugged his shoulder.

Azell tried to ask another question.

“Then.....”

<Ah. We really don't have much time left. I'll tell you the rest when you visit me. I'll be waiting for you.> When Carlos' words ended, Azell's surrounding blurred.

In the end, the dream came to an end, and Azell's consciousness surfaced into reality.

2

Cheep cheep, cheep cheep cheep.....

When he opened his eyes, sunlight streamed through the dense foliage of the tree, and the chirping of birds could be heard. For reference, it felt as if he was in a classic situation that was often seen in stories. Azell pulled himself up as he had such thoughts.

Then he became surprised.

‘My body.....’

His body had been halfway to being a corpse, but now his body felt light right now. It felt as if he could fly away. For a brief moment, he circulated his magical energy through his Energy Pulse, and he realized that his body had completely recovered.

No, it hadn't stopped at his recovery.

‘My Dragon Demon magic has deepened significantly.’

His body had become much sturdier than the body he possessed before his injuries. Most of his magical energy within his body had been converted into Dragon Demon magic.

Moreover, he felt the presence of 10 Dragon weapons.

Moon Sword.

Wings of the Storm Dragon.

Box of Hate.

Underworld Ruler's Marksman.

Chain of the Earth Dragon.

Defender of Dawn.

Unyielding Fortress,

Cry of the Phoenix.

Master of Raging Waves.

Lastly.... The Sky Splitter no long needed to be summoned through the Dragon sword. It had recovered completely. The Sky Splitter was whole now.

Suddenly, Azell felt a wave of ominous magical energy, so he turned his head. He saw the Undead that had always accompanied the Keepers of Prophecy. It was Theta.

<You have awoken, hero Azell Karzark.>

“You are... Didn't you say you were Theta?”

<That's right.>

“You are the one that brought me.....”

At that point, Azell sensed the presence of his comrades, so he surveyed his surrounding.

At an open clearing, the messed up forms of Kairen, Laura, Yuren and Leticia could be seen. They were laid out next to each other.

“This.....”

<I've done some first aid, but they aren't in good condition.> “An Undead saved the lives of the living, and you even did some first aid. It does sound like a joke.”

<It is as one would expect. I'm poor at carrying out such work. Moreover.... I won't be able to use magic much longer.> At those

words, he carefully looked over Theta.

Azell realized Theta was truly in a bad state.

‘The magical energy maintaining the Undead is fading away.’

It wasn’t, because he was exposed to sunlight. Unlike other Undead, Theta was special. He was a high rank magician, so sunlight wasn’t a critical weakness.

Currently, Theta looked like a being that was reaching the end of his lifespan. Azell knew the underlying reason behind it.

“Your existence was tied to the Keepers of the Prophecy.”

<Correct. We are the ‘Sleepless Guardians’. We exist, because we were chosen by the Keepers of the Prophecy.> As a result of the Keepers of Prophecy being gone, Theta couldn’t maintain his existence.

Azell asked a question.

“The Keepers of the Prophecy... What happened to them?”

<They are probably all dead.>

“.....”

<You probably anticipated this answer.>

“I knew it, but.....”

When they became Keepers of Prophecy, they no longer aged, and they only died when they were murdered. They had been in a constant state.

When Leone revealed this truth, it had sounded ridiculous, but Azell understood it now.

When they suffered their first death, they were able to become a part of the Guardian Shadows. It was a great magic that changed the order of the world.

Moreover, Carlos had used the fact that they were of Azell’s bloodline to safekeep his Dragon weapons.

The combination of the Dragon weapons, and the profound magic connected to Azell's bloodline had kept the Keepers of Prophecy alive. They neither aged or developed.

This was why their lives ended when they transferred the Dragon weapons to Azell.

After finishing their mission, they used their remaining power to fight. They allowed Azell to be moved to safety, and they were exterminated.

‘Carlos, why did you choose such a method?’

Azell couldn't understand it.

He knew that Carlos had made the Guardian Shadows, and he knew the purpose that the Keepers of the Prophecy had served. Still, he didn't understand why his Dragon weapons had to be transferred to him by creating such unfortunate beings.

Before he was put to sleep, Azell had given all his 12 Dragon weapons except his Sky Splitter to Carlos.

Of course, he thought Carlos would find new owners for them. However, he had assumed that Carlos had died before being able to transfer the Dragon weapons his descendants. Even if he was able to, the Dragon Demon king worshippers were killing all the humans that possessed Dragon weapons. He had assumed the line of succession of his Dragon weapons had ended.

He never would have expected his Dragon weapons to be preserved in such a manner...

‘This bothers me on many level, but... It seems I'll be able to meet Carlos.’

Theta, who had been observing Azell for a brief amount of time, spoke.

<Since I knew your destination was the Albatan forest, I brought everyone here.> “...this is the Albatan forest?”

<We are at the outer edge of it.>

“How much time has passed.....”

<It hasn't been long. Since all the Guardian Shadows gathered here from all over the continent, we were able to used around 200 of them as diversion.> Theta explained all the events that occurred leading up to their arrival in this place.

The Guardian Shadows could move as if they were sliding across the surface, so there hadn't been any turbulence as the members of the party was moved. The Guardian Shadows had kept them safe. After Theta put the party members into a state of suspended animation, he slowly put his own life energy into them. Theta had kept them alive until they reached this place.

Azell bowed his head.

“Thank you.”

<That's unnecessary.>

Theta shook his head from side to side as he spoke.

<Azell Karzark, I'm part of the 'Sleepless Guardians', so I'm not your descendant like the Keepers of the Prophecy.> “I see.”

<However... We feel the same way as them. We consider you to be the hope. Please bring about the prophecy.> “I'll bring it about no matter what.”

Azell didn't hesitate as he gave the answer.

Theta was like a candle that was about to be extinguished. Azell didn't know if the soul exploited to make an Undead could find peace....

However, he didn't hesitate to show Theta his unwavering resolve.

Theta let out a satisfied laugh.

<Hoo hoo. Thank you. I want to witness their destruction by

your hands.... However, my journey ends here.> The Dark magical energy maintaining the Undead exited, and the skeleton crumbled to the ground. The will infusing the bones was no longer there.

Azell gazed at the spot for a brief moment before he approached his comrades.

3

“Ooh-ook.....”

Kairen opened his eyes. He had a headache, and it felt as if his head was about to be shattered into pieces.

The first thing he saw was Yuren stuffing his face as he pushed his life energy into Kairen. Kairen furrowed his brows.

“Something is really... I feel fortunate for my current situation, yet it feels unpleasant at the same time.”

“I tried so hard save your life, yet you say such words to me? I didn’t even have the time to take a break for a meal. I had to continuously inject the life energy into you.”

Yuren grumbled. Kairen complained.

“I’m thankful for that part,but.... Ooh-ook.”

He was about to raise his body, but he lowered himself when pain washed over him. He let out a groan. Yuren shook his head from side to side.

“Please stay still and lie down. Your body is in a rough shape.”

“Mmm. It seems you are right. Could you enlighten me a little bit on our current situation?”

“We are at the Albatan forest.”

“...what?”

Kairen became surprised. Yuren spoke as if he was having a hard time believing his own words.

“We haven’t entered deep into the forest. We are located at the

edge. According to Azell, the Guardian Shadows transported us here.”

“I have know idea what’s going on.....”

“It is the same for all of us.”

“Everyone seems to be alive, so that’s a blessing.”

“Duke, you were the last one to wake up.”

Azell woke up Laura and Yuren first. Then Azell asked the Guardian Shadows to catch the small animals nearby. The two magicians used their black magic to steal the life energy from the animals, and they healed themselves.

After they recovered themselves, Laura took on the task of healing Leticia, and Yuren was assigned to Kairen. Leticia and Kairen was slowly brought to consciousness.

Kairen asked a question.

“What about Azell?”

“He went out to catch some beasts.”

“Mmmm?”

Kairen had a baffled expression on his face. From what he remembered last, Azell’s body was in a broken state, yet he went out to catch wild animals?

“Did I fall into a hibernation for a very long time? Has it been a month?”

There were cases where Dragon Majins fell into hibernation when they suffered a critical injury. It was a mechanism for recovery. This was why he brought up this possibility, but Yuren shook his head.

“No. It has been only two days.”

“...then what happened?”

“It seems the Keepers of Prophecy had kept Azell’s Dragon

weapons in safekeeping. When the Dragon weapons were transferred over to him, he made a complete recovery..... It isn't just the fact that he looks completely normal now. He became much stronger than before."

"Are you sure I'm not dreaming right now? Somehow I am having trouble keeping up with our current situation."

"This is reality."

"Mmmm."

"Since you've recovered enough to wake up, I can relax now. I'll heal you once again after I finish my meal. Azell said he would give a more detailed explanation of our current situation when everyone woke up. Let's wait for that."

"Understood. Hoo-ooh....."

Kairen let out a sigh.

Chapter 160 - Inherited Resolution (2)

4

After a short amount of time had passed, Azell returned with the beasts he had caught. Then he gave a detailed account of what had happened.

He told them about the identity of the Keepers of the Prophecy and their mission. Then the party members heard about how the Keepers of the Prophecy had met their end. The party members were at a loss for words.

“Let me see if I got this right.....”

Leticia broke the silence, and she pointed a finger towards Azell.

“Azell, you roamed around between women, and your promiscuity was the reason why we were saved?”

“...mmm. Unfortunately, you aren’t saying anything that isn’t true, so I can’t give you a rebuttal.”

“This really is.....”

Leticia furrowed her brows.

“I never knew you were that kind of a man. Since you were the legendary hero, I held a slight amount of admiration towards you. It’s pathetic that I had felt such emotions for you.”

“.....”

Azell looked as if he had chewed on a bug. He really wanted to make excuses, but he swallowed any thoughts of doing so. He would probably be seen as human trash if he did so.

Even Laura looked at him with cool eyes as she spoke one word.

“Pervert.”

That single word was more powerful than every other criticism.

“Ooh.....”

From Azell's perspective, the future had been something that he wasn't sure he would be able to see. This was why he decided to be more faithful to the present than the nebulous future. That was the type of era he had lived in. Therefore, when he caught someone's eyes, he had share his love with her....

'If I said that out loud, this will really turn into a mess. Shit.'

He was self aware as to how this looked like, and he had his pride. Therefore, he couldn't stepforward to defend himself. In truth, he didn't know if anything would change if he made a defense for himself or not. However, this was important to him.

When the atmosphere turned chilly, Kairen stepped forward to mediate.

"Let's drop the subject for now. Our lives were saved thanks to it."

"Does this mean like attracts like? I see how it is. You are a great noble, so your feelings towards promiscuity differs from normal people. Isn't it normal for nobles to go after every woman they see? Isn't it normal for them to make many children out of wedlock?"

"Nope. I have no children. I'm sure of it."

At Kairen's words, Leticia's gaze turned cold.

"You were careful enough not to sire any children, but you don't find promiscuity to be a problem?"

"Why the hell are you interpreting my words that way? Stop treating me like I'm in the same category as Azell."

"...Duke. Instead of defending me, you are going to bury me alive."

Azell grumbled.

Kairen had been looking at Azell with playful eyes, but his expression suddenly hardened.

“However, I never expected the Keepers of Prophecy to have such backgrounds....”

The Keepers of Prophecy were allies that had been hard to trust. It was frustrating, since one couldn't discern their true intentions. Moreover, there was a strong animosity developed when they took questionable actions to confirm whether Azell was the prophesied being or not.

However, when their backstories became known, such emotions melted away like snow.

“I still do not like the actions they had taken.... However, I think can understand the motivation behind it now.”

Laura and Leticia was also in agreement with that statement.

After losing everything to the Dragon Demon king worshippers, they were stripped of their past memories to become the Keepers of the Prophecy. They had fought over the long years with only their hatred and a sense of duty keeping them going.

They had surely been tired and worn down as time passed. After the Great Darkness, it was as if they were lost in a fog of despair. The only light they could rely on was the prophesied being. This was why nothing had been off limits when they were trying to confirm whether Azell was the prophesied being or not. Moreover, when they did confirm this truth, they willingly entrusted the future to Azell. They had sacrificed themselves for him.

“In truth, I'm still having a hard time absorbing everything, but.....”

Suddenly, Azell spoke.

“It seems I've incurred a big debt to my future descendants.”

He had went into slumber in an attempt to beat the curse. While he was asleep, the world had changed too much.

He had wanted to created a better future. He wanted to drive

away the despair that was rampant all over the world. He had wanted to embark on the future with his people. He had wanted to do so with a smile full of hope on his face. He had fought for this ardent desire even as he stepped over the corpses of his comrades.

However....

He had been unable to stamp out the phantoms from his past, and they had upset the world.

The Keepers of Prophecy started, because of Azell. They were his descendants, who had been tormented, because Azell had been unable to tie up the loose ends. Despite this fact, his descendants had willingly entrusted the future to him, and it left a lasting resolve that couldn't be erased from Azell's heart.

‘No matter what, I have to.....’

Azell firmed his resolve as he thought about the nine faces that had looked towards him.

‘I will achieve the objective you all entrusted in me.’

5

No one knew how many Dragons lived within the Albatan forest. It was a place overflowing with wild beasts and monsters. There were so many within the vast forest that if monsters or beasts didn't have their own territory, they overflowed out of the forest into the Iellos Kingdom. It was common to see fights along the borders.

“Even if we go a little bit deeper, we have to be prepared for the danger we will face. It is a bit different from what I remember, but this is still one of the Demon lands. It is a place where even the Dragon Demon king worshippers avoided....”

The party had to travel to the deepest part of the forest.

It was called a forest, so it didn't sound too large. However, it truly was a vast stretch of land. Its size rivaled the Iellos kingdom.

If one sailed along the coastline, one would be able to see the Atisan mountain range. If combined with the forest, these amazingly large stretches of land was a wasteland where humans couldn't traverse.

Kairen had heard about the Albatan forest from Azell, so he asked the question.

“While we have the Vitan's Chalice amongst our possession, we can't avoid being tracked.”

“Still, we can't give up on the Vitan's Chalice.”

Azell spoke.

The Vitan's Chalice was too powerful of a weapon to give up on. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that Laura's battle capabilities increased several folds when she had the Vitan's Chalice in her possession.

Then there was the other problem. If they gave up on the Vitan's Chalice, it would be returned to the hands of their enemies.

“There is the option of sealing it. I might hide it, but it is an item that's being preserved by Atein's magic.....”

Azell took a peek at Laura, and he tried to see how Yuren would react. Both were high rank magicians, who boasted high level of skills. This was why they were careful in giving their answer.

Of course, it wasn't as if Azell didn't know what Lauren and Yuren was going to say.

Laura shook her head from side to side.

“It's not possible.”

Yuren shrugged his shoulders.

“I couldn't even discern what method was used to preserve this Dragon weapon.....”

At his words, Kairen furrowed his brows.

“In the end, we have no choice, but to take on the good with the bad. Fortunately, the Road of Darkness wasn’t built anywhere near here.....”

“Even Atein respected this place as the domain of Albatan.”

“Still, there is no guarantee Albatan would look kindly at our presence. What if the Demon King worshippers don’t care about the risks of following us here?”

“It’s been 220 years, so I don’t know how much the situation had changed here. By the look of things, Albatan is still alive, and it seems he still rules over this place.....”

Azell made these presumptions before he continued his thoughts.

“First, we have to go deeper into the forest despite the risks.”

“We have to go into a place crawling with Dragons, wild beasts and monsters? Why?”

“This Demon land is called Albatan, but.... It isn’t as if Albatan pays attention to everything that goes on in this large land. He’ll only use his power as the absolute ruler of this land when humans try to claim this place as their territory. Aside from such intrusions, he is pretty lax.”

“Is this akin to a lord possessing several villages within his territory? The guards and committee members take care of the minor problems, and the lord is disturbed only for the important decisions and events?”

“You have to widen the scope of your analogy. Basically, Albatan is the king, and he rules over his kingdom. Under his rule, there are lords of various factions, and they squabble amongst each other.”

“Hmm. Are you saying it isn’t a lawless region?”

“They are living between numerous Dragons, so these factions try to avoid the Dragons. This precipitates the fight between

them.”

“What factions are you talking about?”

“That I do not know. It has been 220 years, so I’m sure things haven’t remained the same. However, I’m sure that Dragon Demons or Dragon Majins lead these factions.”

“Are there a lot of Dragon Demons and Dragon Majins here?”

“There should be over 300?”

“Mmmm.....”

Kairen groaned.

Wasn’t that an incredible amount of force?

Azell spoke.

“There were also a lot of humans. Then there are the Wolfnoids that are hard to see anywhere else.....”

“When you say Wolfnoid, are you referring to lycanthropes?”

“No. Lycanthropes are cursed existences that shows up in legends.”

“What’s the difference between the two?”

“Lycanthropes are humans that were cursed, and their form became a mixture of beast and human. Wolfnoid are a race that is shaped like wolfmen. Since the Wolfnoids aren’t really known to humans, Carlos theorized that the tales of the lycanthropes arose when people witnessed Wolfnoids.... However, that story doesn’t matter to our current situation.”

“Hmmm.....”

“Rare beings that were pushed out by humans live here. This place is ruled by the survival of the fittest, but they will prevent outsiders from wiping out the people within the territory..... This was Albatan’s will in ruling this land, and that is why humans call it the land of the Demons.”

“Did you hear this from Albatan himself?”

“Yes. However, it was a long time ago.....”

Azell let out a bitter laugh. The memory had left a deep impression within him. Albatan was an amazing existence. Carlos had been unable to close his mouth, which had hung wide open.

“A Dragon told you that. It really is hard to swallow that story.....”

Kairen shook his head from side to side. To him, Dragons were beings that were incapable of holding a conversation. They were closer to a natural disaster than living beings.

“However, there is an existence in front of me that also told me a story that was hard to believe. I guess I should believe you.”

Azell grinned at his words.

Laura spoke.

“I really is hard to believe, pervert.”

“.....”

Azell’s laughter turned pitiful. Azell forcefully let out a bright smile as he spoke.

“Uh. Anyways.... It seems our conversation strayed offtopic.”

Azell explained why he had to go to the heart of the Demon land as soon as possible.

It was as he explained a moment ago. Albatan was accepted as the absolute king of this land, but he practiced a principle of noninterference. This was why several factions existed and fought amongst each other. It was the survival of the fittest. However, if Azell’s party remained here, their enemies would soon track them down. They couldn’t be afraid of clashing against the factions within the Albatan forest.

“They won’t bring a large army.... For example, there is a

possibility only Reygus and Almarick will enter this place. They know this region well, so they'll try to fight us in regions where Albatan doesn't directly rule..”

“Are you sure about this?”

“It happened before.”

“Mmmm?”

“At that time, Atein was here too.”

“What did you just say?”

Everyone became surprised by his words, so they turned to look at him. Azell shrugged his shoulders as he smirked.

“I met one of my teacher named Reshoo here. At the time, he wasn't affiliated with any power within this place. He lived alone, and there was a big hubbub when Reshoo challenged Atein to a fight.”

Reshoo had lost in that fight, and he was at death's door. Azell intervened, and he was able to critically wound Atein once.

Azell spoke.

“That is why we can't take it easy by staying in one place. After everyone recovers somewhat, I have a method that will allow us to travel there in a single effort. Until that time, we'll be careful as we move inward. We also have them with us....”

Azell looked at the Guardian Shadows that kept appearing and disappearing between the trees.

Chapter 161 - Inherited Resolution (3)

6

The Plain of Darkness was in an uproar.

After Azel Karzark's identity was confirmed, the Dragon Demon general Almarick had revealed himself.

This event caused a bigger wave than the time when Reygus woke up as an Undead. Even the core power of the Plain of Darkness could sense a storm coming.

The shock that rippled through the Almarick tribe was quite significant.

Almarick hadn't notified anyone in his tribe that he had been revived. Even after his revival, he kept his identity hidden. He had posed as a recluse.

This really was a baffling turn of event.

He was a Dragon Demon general, yet no one had been by his side when he was revived.

So how was he able to acquire a safe-haven near the Dragon Demon palace, and how had he managed to stay hidden?

There was a reason why he had been able to do all of this.

"It has been a while, sir Almarick."

Queen Aincera sought out Almarick to have a conversation with him.

After she lost all human emotions, she rarely left her room. Also, if one thought about her position, Almarick should have gone to see her.

Still, she couldn't force Almarick to come to her even if it was a matter of importance. He had suffered a serious injury. This was why she used the Great Darkness to send a clone to talk to him.

Almarick smiled as he lay on top of the bed.

“My body is in distress, so I’ll have to take audience from my bed. Please excuse my rudeness.”

“I don’t mind it. I’m not here with my real body.”

“Thank you. Do you remember what happened?”

“I vaguely remember it. At the time, I thought it was necessary to erase it, so I did it. However, it seems my memories won’t fully return.”

Aincera had facilitated the business of providing Almarick with a place to stay. However, she had forgotten everything until Almarick revealed himself. He had done so to draft the forces of his tribe to his cause.

She had erased her own memories. A person with a strong ego usually has a strong attachment to one’s memories. The act of erasing one’s memories usually caused incredible amount of fear and resistance. The resistance was so strong that it usually threatened one’s life if one attempted it. However, after Aicera had listened to Almarick’s story, she willingly erased her memories.

“.....”

Almarick looked at her for a brief moment.

It was hard to call her as being Aincera anymore. She had lost herself when she became the nervous system of the Great Darkness.

Aincera had lost her heart, so she couldn’t read the emotions contained within Almarick’s gaze. If it was anyone else, she could have read the information through the Great Darkness. However, Almarick was free from the control of her power.

‘I never expected a day to come where I would pity her.....’

In the past, Almarick had been on bad terms with Aincera.

He didn’t hate her per se. He had been different in the past.

Unlike his current self, he had been the embodiment of wildness. He had been feral. On the other hand, Aincera had been noble and calm. This was why she had avoided being near him. In turn, this soured Almarick's disposition towards her.

Currently, she wasn't showing a single hint of revulsion towards Almarick.

It wasn't, because Almarick had changed. It was true that his disposition had changed. He had to pose as a retired elder, and he had gone through a surprising amount of change. He was much calmer than his previous self, and there was an air of intelligence around him. Even Reygus was having a hard time believing he was Almarick.

However, Aincera was acting differently from her past, because her sense of self had faded away. It was a situation where it was unknown as to whether she had a sense of self anymore. Despite knowing the risk from the beginning, she had accepted this role, and Almarick could only look at her with pity.

Aincera spoke.

"Since you stepped forward, I didn't expect you to fail in catching them."

"You are poking me at a sore spot. I was too careless."

Almarick let out a bitter laugh.

Was it the side effect of being raised from the dead? Or was it deep emotions he felt when he met an old foe after such a long time?

Anyways, he lost any rights to call Reygus an idiot any more. He had also been a prisoner to his emotions. While he enjoyed the moment, it came back to bite him.....

The will shown by the Guardian Shadows in their efforts to safely evacuate Azell had been terrifying.

After giving up the Dragon weapons stored within their bodies, the Keepers of Prophecy knew this was their final battlefield. Since they knew this was their final fight, they had displayed their might. They were able to drive Reygus and Almarick into a corner.

“This confirms it. Carlos Rizester was the one that had created the Guardian Shadows.”

Almarick became certain of this fact when he fought the Keepers of the Prophecy.

Of course, he didn't know the connection they had with Azell. However.....

“The magic they embodied.... I'm sure it was Carlos' magic.”

The Guardian Shadows were created using a great magic that changed the face of the world, and it was connected to Carlos.

The Keepers of Prophecy weren't all skilled in battle. There were those like Balseru and Iota, who were powerful. Then there were those like Jares, who fell behind in terms of battle capability. Some were in charge of maintaining the Sleepless Guardians, and others were there to control the Guardian Shadows.

However, as their bodies slowly broke down into energy, they were able to create a menacing magic spell. The disintegration of their bodies fueled the spell.

This spell was connected to the movements of the Guardian Shadows, and it had an earth shattering effect. When the Keepers of the Prophecy were all dead, Almarick had received a life-threatening injury. Even the Undead Reygus suffered partial destruction. Moreover, 70% of the Demon King worshippers were killed. It was a massive loss.

After taking such heavy losses, they hadn't been able to exterminate Azell's party, and most of the Guardian Shadows present were able escape intact.

Aincera still spoke in a disinterested manner.

“Even if Azell Karzark survived, there is a limit to his power. The two of you are Dragon Demon generals revived by the king’s contingency plan. Shouldn’t you be able to handle Azell?”

Hadn’t Reygus already won against Azell in a one on one fight?

Almarick shook his head from side to side.

“I can’t guarantee it. Azell really is a being that is hard to predict. Moreover, his unpredictability rises when one considers the fact that Carlos is supporting him. The organization called the Guardian Shadows.... It was created to be a deterrent force against us. The fact that Carlos was able to do this should make us feel afraid.”

“I agree.”

Aincera nodded her head.

“One of our plan is already in motion. Chaos and death is spreading in the human world.... When the king returns, we will be able to fulfill his wish.”

“I guess so.”

However, Almarick was having a different thought.

‘What is the king’s true intention?’

Almarick’s revival from death had been arranged by Atein, but it didn’t mean he understood Atein’s intentions.

During the Dragon Demon war, he had prophesied his own defeat. This was why he had left behind contingency plans like the Great Darkness within the Dragon Demon palace. What had Atein been thinking?

The only thing he was sure of was....

“When the king returns, new allies will arrive in accordance to our pact. At that time, we’ll be able to learn more of what he intends to do.”

Reygus was in the deepest underground location within the Dragon Demon palace. He was at a location that was named the Abyss.

The Great Darkness was spread across the entire continent by using the Dragon Demon king worshippers as a medium, and this place could be called the nucleus of the Great Darkness.

This was where the essence of Darkness refined by magic was gathered. Reygus was very familiar with this feeling. He had already been revived from death once, and his revival could be traced back to the Great Darkness.

<It really is annoying to come here, because of the stairs.>

The Abyss was basically an enormous tomb. The staircase leading down was helical in structure, and the steps protruded from the walls. It was wide enough to allow only a single person to traverse down it. Reygus was a giant that was over 3 meters tall, so the stairway was too small for him. He had to stick to the wall as he travelled downward. He was performing an acrobatic feat.

There was a silhouette of a pale girl next to him.

-Is that the king?

Kayalia asked the question as she looked at the center of the Abyss.

There wasn't a single light within the darkness that was coalesced through magic. However, Reygus and Kayalia could see the form within the darkness.

It was the Dragon Demon King Atein's body. It was slowly recovering as time passed.

According to the observations recorded by the Plain of Darkness, his bones were the first to form. Organs, muscles and nerves followed next. The last to form was his skin. His skin started to

grow from his fingertips and toes. It crawled inwards, and skin was now starting to cover Atein's body.

If one thought about the process, it felt as if the revival wasn't too far off. However, Kayalia tilted her head in puzzlement.

-Did sir Almarick go through this process in his revival?

<I do not know. Even he has no memories on how he was revived.>

-Then you don't know how you were revived also?

<It was as if I woke up from a long sleep, and I was like this.>

-Hmm.....

<Was it the same for you?>

-It's always the same for me.

<Mmm?>

-Ah. It is a little bit different each time. After I was dispersed, I pulled myself together, and I found myself in this form.....

<This time? What do you mean?>

-You knew what I was before I became engaged to the king, right?

<At the very least, you weren't in this form. Ah, I'm using your past self as the standard.>

-That standard can't be used on my current self. Anyways, the ingredients that makes up 'me' was scattered, and I was put back together. However, the current 'me' that is put back together is a little bit different from my past self. I need two things to realize what change has actually occurred. I need time and a trigger.

<Hmm. It sounds profound.>

-That was the reason why the king proposed to me. It was a mutually beneficial relationship.

<...that was the reason why the two of you got engaged?>

-The rules of my tribe was strict. We can only trade kernels of our techniques with those that marry one of our tribe members. That is the minimum threshold.

<Your relationship with him sounds quite dreary.>

-Amongst all of us, the only one blinded by love was Aincera unni. The king was the only man for her. Unexpectedly, she loved with a fiery passion.

<Love seems to be out of character with her.....>

-When she inherited the Great Darkness from the king.... She made the choice knowing the consequences. The king wasn't someone that would hide his problems. He wouldn't just push off his responsibility onto another.

<.....>

-I didn't like that part about unni, but at the same time, I was a bit jealous of her.

<...I see.>

Kayalia flew up into the Darkness, and she approached Atein's body, which was slowly recovering within the Abyss. She carefully looked over him as she spoke.

-However, something does bother me.

<What is it?>

-Why did the king insist on using this strange method to revive himself?

<Mmmm?>

-He is someone that is capable of using my technique. His revival could have been much simpler and faster.... So why?

Kayalia mumbled to herself as if she didn't understand this point.

The Albatan forest was truly large. The sea of trees were endless no matter how far they traveled. Even if there were occasional gaps in the tree, their sight was obstructed by mountains.

This place deserved to be called the Demonic lands. It was that dangerous.

The party had travelled for only a day, yet they had fought numerous foes. At times, they faced wild beasts, wild beasts consolidated under a leader, and....

“Wow. Those are Ettins. I’ve heard about them, but this is the first time I’ve seen one!”

Yuren was taken aback.

A giant possessing two ugly heads was attacking the party. It was over 10 meters tall, and each of its steps shook the ground. It was of the giant race, but it was a higher race than the ogres. They were called the Ettins.

“They are annoying.”

Leticia grumbled.

Orc archers were shooting at them from various locations. However, the arrows were flying through an irregular path. It seems there was a magician controlling the path of the arrows. The arrows weaved through the trees.

The forest held terrifying foes. However, they couldn’t touch the party members.

-Unyielding Fortress!

Chapter 162 - Inherited Resolution (4)

-Unyielding Fortress!

A ripple made out of light surrounded them. All the arrows were repelled when they came in contact with the ripple.

The ripple even repelled the attacks by the the Ettins.

Goo-wuhhhhhhhh!

Ettins were so large that they didn't need any weapons. Their arms were unusually long compared to the proportion of their body, and the distal ends of their hands were formed of a substance that was as hard as a rock.

The swings of their arms exceeded the damage one could cause with a battering ram.

Koo-oooooooohng!

However, the light ripple easily absorbed the impact. The Ettins ate up too much ground with their long strides, so the party wasn't able to lose them. However, the party was able to advance in a very laid-back manner.

Azell spoke.

"At this point, they should have realized the gap between our capabilities..... It'll be annoying, but I'll have to kill their leader."

"Annoying? Is that all there is to it?"

Kairen couldn't suppress his laughter as he asked the question.

Azell answered him.

"I am thankful that they are becoming partners for my rehab training, so I don't want to kill them if I don't have to. It is true that we are intruding into their territory, so my response will be mild."

The light ripple, which was protecting the party members, was

Azell's Dragon weapon named 'Unyielding Fortress'. It was as the name implied. The Dragon weapon boasted powerful defensive abilities.

If Azell wanted to do so, he could have responded by giving orders to the Guardian Shadows. However, he wanted to avoid a fight, so he had focused on defense. This didn't mean their enemies gave up on their attacks. In the end, Azell had to summon a new Dragon weapon.

-Rise Dragon weapon! Dawn's Defender!

A bubbles made out of light appeared in the air, and it formed into a silhouette. It looked as if it was drawn with white light, yet it held a resemblance to Azell.

Kairen was surprised.

"It isn't your clone?"

"It is my Dragon weapon. I share my senses, thoughts and magical energy with it. It can fight autonomously. Also... I want to borrow your strengths."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Your cooperation will let me add your powers to the Dawn's Defender. You just have to give consent."

Azell let out a laugh. His expression said he was hiding a secret. Everyone was confused, but they followed his instruction.

What followed next was.....

"Uh?"

Silhouettes made out of light appeared next to each of them. They resembled the party members.

Azell spoke.

"The maximum I can make is eight, but there aren't that many of us. I'll fill the rest with myself."

Three more silhouettes that resembled Azell appeared. There was a total of eight of them.

They dashed out of the Unyielding Fortress, and they started to fight.

“What the hell?”

Laura was shocked. Their sight was obstructed by the forest, but Yuren and Lauren was able to place a magic eye in the air to survey their surrounding. This was why they were able to see the battle.....

“They are using our abilities?”

Yuren mumbled in disbelief.

Azell had made eight silhouettes using his Dragon weapon, Dawn’s Defender. These silhouettes were fighting in the same style as the party. Their martial abilities, magic and even personal abilities were being replicated. The silhouette resembling Leticia was using her abilities, which dealt with frost.

In a flash, their enemies started to fall.

The battle capability of the Dawn’s Defenders were so overwhelming that their enemies were being subdued without any deaths. Even the Ettins were easily subdued by the magic used by the silhouette that looked liked Laura and Yuren.

Kairen was baffled as he asked a question.

“Those are our abilities.... Did you create an exact clone of us?”

“It isn’t an exact one, but you are correct.”

Dragon weapon Dawn’s Defender could create up to 8 cloned soldiers. It replicated the user of the weapon, and anyone that declared their support to the wielder. It didn’t matter if one was a warrior or a magician. It could replicate the person’s specialty skills.

“However, there is a limit. It cannot replicate the power of tools

like the Dragon weapons. It also resonates to borrow one's thought process and overall skill. That is why the people being replicated has to be present. There's a limits to the abilities they could use, and the magical energy is inferior compared to the original."

Azell's party possessed much stronger magical energy compared to an average Dragon Majin. The Dawn's Defenders possessed inferior abilities compared to them.

This still meant each of them possessed magical energy that rivaled a Dragon Majin. The Dragon weapon could create eight of them. It truly was a terrifying weapon.

Laura spoke.

"That was the Dragon weapon you used to defeat Baldazark...."

"That's right. It was count Banan's Dragon weapon. He was killed by Baldazark."

Count Banan was a mild mannered magician of few words. However, he had also been a determined man with the flame of revenge burning within his heart. He had lost countless family members and comrades through the Dragon Demon war. His longing for them had been transferred in the creation of the Dragon weapon called the Dawn's Defender.

He was a powerful force on the battlefield, but he found himself in a disadvantageous situation against Baldazark. He had to fight one on one with Baldazark, and he had suffered a grievous wound that he couldn't recover from. This was why he picked Azell as the person that would wield his Dragon weapon. He closed his eyes after transferring his weapon to Azell.

In the future, Azell would replicate his comrades with his Dragon weapon, and he used overwhelming numbers to defeat Baldazark.

Kairen couldn't hide his surprise.

"This is truly amazing. It seems the records doesn't do you any justice as to what you accomplished. I never expected such

wondrous abilities.....”

“Mmm. We should stop talking about it. It is embarrassing.”

Azell let out a bitter laugh.

9

Azell’s party forged ahead as they fought.

Aside from Azell, the other party members were still in rough shape. Azell had recovered nine of his Dragon weapons from the Keepers of the Prophecy, so his battle capability was overpowered. It didn’t matter, which opponents showed up. He was able to continue his ridiculous feat of subduing his enemies with minimal bloodshed.

There was a general unrest amongst the inhabitants of the Albatan forest.

‘Powerful outsiders have shown up at the edge of the forest. We can’t even touch them.’

‘They are a strange bunch. We are the ones bringing the fight to them, yet they are avoiding killing us. They are just moving forward.’

‘Are we going to take this insult lying down? Or.....’

As time passed, the rumor about Azell’s party spread throughout the forest. The factions within the forest were antagonistic towards each other, but at the same time, they worked together to repel outside forces. This was why the news about Azell’s party were being spread amongst them.

This was also what Azell was aiming for.

If they wanted to, the party could have moved stealthily through the forest. Azell had his concealment technique, and there were two high rank magicians within his party. They could have avoided around 90% of the enemies they had faced.

However, Azell purposefully made himself visible as he

continued to fight.

His intentions were finally delivered to his opponents on the morning of the 4th day after they entered the Albatan forest.

Azell's party sensed two people coming towards them from the other side of the forest.

Everyone became tense.

'They are strong!'

Their opponents purposefully let their existence be known. From the force that could be felt from far away, they knew these two beings were strong. They couldn't take these two lightly.

Kairen licked his lips.

"These won't be easy opponents."

In the past four days, the party had come across skilled Dragon Majins and Dragon Demons.

They all brought along monsters like orcs or wild beasts. It was a truly strange sight for the party members. However, it seems such sights were the norm in this place.

Azell broke through all of them as he continued to fight out in the open.

"Are you the outsiders that's making a ruckus in the forest?"

His voice was low, and his white hair was untamed. He was a middle aged Dragon Majin with dark blue eyes, horns and Dragon Stone. He was an intimidating big man with boulder-like muscles. Then there was the young and beautiful Dragon Majin next to him. Her long blonde hair hung loose, and she looked at the party with curiosity in her eyes.

Azell stepped forward.

"Everyone blindlessly attacked us, so we just protected ourselves."

“You talk out of both sides of your mouth. You did purposefully cause the ruckus.”

“What evidence do you have to make such an assertion? The inhabitants of the forest attacked us first.”

“That is true. However.... You are only human, yet you are as strong as the heroes of our forest. You didn’t hide yourself or run away. You provoked them to attack. Do you really want me to believe that this wasn’t avoidable?”

“Everyone in my party is injured except me. That is why I behaved badly..”

The Dragon Majin male snorted.

“Well, all right. I don’t care what schemes you are trying to hatch.”

“So basically you want us to prove that we are worthy of speaking with you? You want us to prove it through strength.”

“It seems you are well aware of what I’m trying to do. Did you do all of this knowing this would happen? I will give you the opportunity to prove your strength through a one on one battle with me. I am paying respects to your skills, which allowed you to get here without killing a single being. If you prove your strength, I will grant your request.”

“Do you know what I want?”

“You want to meet Albatan-nim. Am I right?”

“We are on the same page. Good.”

Azell grinned.

The Dragon Magin male spoke.

“I am Albatan-nim’s hero Havan.”

“I am sir Azell Zestringer.”

“...Azell?”

The one to react wasn't Havan. It was the blonde haired Dragon Majin female.

However, Havan didn't wait for her to speak. A wave of Dragon Demon magic spread like a storm.

-Open Dragon Soul!

Azell became surprised when he saw this.

"What the hell?"

By the look of him, Azell had assumed his opponent possessed a Dragon weapon. However, the Dragon Majin male use a strange technique instead of summoning his Dragon weapon.

A semi-translucent light dragon curled around Havan's body. The image of the dragon was made out of a semi-translucent green light, and it growled. Azell could feel a powerful will as if the dragon was a living being.

Azell asked a question.

"I've never seen this technique before. Could you tell me the name of it?"

"This is the Dragon Soul. It is a sworn friend awakened through the Dragon's power sleeping within me."

"I can't discern anything through that explanation....."

"I have no obligations to tell you any more. Now it is time for you to prove yourself."

After making the declaration, Havan unsheathed his sword. It was twice as large as a normal long sword. It was a huge sword.

"I'm not too fond of unreasonable battle freaks, but I guess I have no choice."

Azell snorted. In the next moment, Havan charged Azell, who hadn't even unsheathed his sword.

However, there was no sound of sword meeting flesh. Azell had

resolved into two. The close placed its hand on the surface of Havan's sword, and he sidestepped the blow. Azell's true body was behind Havan, and an explosive wave of Dragon Demon magic emanated from Azell.

-Come Dragon weapon! Moon sword!

A slender strand of light appeared in midair, and it formed into a sword that curved gently. It was as if the sword was carved from the moon in the night sky.

Havan let out a sharp laugh when he saw it.

“As expected, you are a wielder of a Dragon weapon!”

“I thought you were one too.”

Azell gave his reply as he used his Instantaneous Movement to disappear. In a flash, Havan also used his Instantaneous Movement technique.

Pah-jee-jee-jeek!

A fierce spark formed when the red sword clashed against the Moon sword. The expulsive power of the blow should have flung them backwards, but the two refused to move.

At some point in time, the light dragon surrounding Havan started to move. It stretched its neck towards Azell's side, and it spat out a beam of light.

“Ho-oh! Is that how you use it?”

The sound of the explosion rang out. Azell and Havan separated into their respective corners.

Azell dashed towards the retreating Havan. He had been aiming for the moment when they were pushed back from the repulsive force. However, it was Azell's clone that had blitzed Havan. Havan mumbled to himself as he deflected the clone's attack.

“You are a mere human, yet you are able to use Incarnation masterfully....”

Incarnation was considered to be one of the most outstanding skills amongst the Dragon Arts. One had to have aptitude for the skill to reach the pinnacle of this skill, and it truly was rare to see someone that had reached such heights with the skill.

However, one of the heroes within the Albatan forest was able to use Incarnation, so Havan was able to keep his cool. He didn't flounder. However, another clone formed in the next moment, and they attack Havan. Havan was frantic as he was pushed back by Azell's attacks.

The Dragon Demon female, who had been watching all of this, let out a shout.

"Husband! This human.....!"

"This is a battle where the pride of two warriors are on the line! Don't interfere!"

Havan let out a stubborn yell.

The members of Azell's party became surprised. Those two were married?

The Dragon Demon female puffed up as she grumbled to herself.

"Stubborn idiot."

Kairen asked her a question.

"Are you really going to let them fight a one on one battle?"

"Mmm? Your side haven't interfered yet. Why? Do you plan on helping your comrade?"

She tilted her head in question. Kairen shook his head from side to side.

"The thought hadn't even crossed my mind. Moreover, my help isn't needed."

"I want to say you are being impertinent, but....."

Suddenly, she let out a bitter laugh.

“The problem is that you might be right. I should have fought instead of him.”

While they were talking, the fight between the two had intensified. They were moving at incredibly high speeds, and at times, they used Instantaneous movement to move around. It was dizzying to watch. The beautiful trees broke every time they clashed, and the shock wave swept over the surrounding.

Kairen couldn't hide his surprise as he watched the fight.

Havan was a Dragon Majin, but his Dragon Demon magic was stronger than most Dragon Demons. Moreover, his technique was also excellent. Even if Kairen was at full strength, he couldn't guarantee his victory if he fought against Havan.

‘I’m still not sure what that is.....’

Chapter 163 - Inherited Resolution (5)

The light dragon coiled around Havan's body. It was acting as an armor and a weapon. Azell attacked as he appeared unpredictably from all sides, yet his attacks were being blocked by the light dragon. Moreover, the light dragon was simultaneously attacking Azell using its tail and the powerful beam of light emitted from its mouth.

'Is that a Dragon weapon? No, Azell was surprised when he saw it. It might not be a Dragon weapon.'

The light dragon attacked alongside Havan as if they were of one mind. However, Havan was losing. His specialty was using powerful attacks that accentuated his strength. However, Azell was cutting off his attacks before it could gain any steam.

Azell's clones were too fickle as their numbers increased and decreased at any moment. Havan's senses were confused, and he couldn't highlight his advantages. He was continuously being pushed backwards. He suddenly became furious as he yelled out.

"Shit! What an evil weapon!"

He finally identified the ability of the Moon sword. However, it was too late. Azell smiled.

"You were too slow in realizing it. This is what you get for being a brute, who rely solely on your strength."

Dragon weapon Moon sword.

It was Azell's very first Dragon weapon. It was the sword he inherited from his third teacher Liglan.

Liglan's Dragon weapon was eccentric. Two swords made up a single Dragon weapon. Originally, it was called the Sun and the Moon sword. The Moon sword took control and absorbed the magical energy in the surrounding. The Sun sword amplified the energy several folds before it emitted the magical energy.

When Liglan was trying to save Azell, he had transferred only the Moon sword to Azell.

The two swords had to be used as a pair. However, he had been given only one, so of course, the sword couldn't be used properly. This was why Azell had gone through several Dragon Slayer's Ritual to evolve the Moon sword, which had lost its other half. The reconstituted Moon sword possessed much stronger ability to dominate and absorb magical energy. Its ability couldn't be compare to its former self.

“S...shit!”

Havan was stunned.

If one had some ability to control magical energy, it was possible to seize and absorb magical energy from one's surrounding. However, how could a Dragon weapon chip away even the magical energy in his body when it hadn't even touched him?

Moreover, if he was careless in emitting his magical energy, his opponent would absorb it all. In fact, he had consumed several times more magical energy than any battle he had participated in before. It was an extreme amount.

In the end, Havan decided to use something he had held back as a gambit for victory.

“My sworn brother! Do not hold back your power!”

The light dragon started to burn like a flame.

Until now, Havan's attack had been interrupted before it could initiate, so he hadn't been able to use any of his big skills. However, this was his light dragon's ace in the hole ability. The power immediately boosted his Dragon Demon magic by several folds.

Azell's eyes shone.

“So you aren't thinking about the aftermath?”

Azell immediately realized what Havan was doing.

He confirmed it through the fight. The light Dragon was something similar to the Dragon weapons. It was formed through Dragon Demon magic, yet it needed the Dragon Demon magic of the wielder.

Havan consumed the Dragon Demon magic needed to maintain the form of the light Dragon, and he gained a several fold amplification to his power. It was a similar method to the one Azell had used to bring out a power that exceeded his vessel. In this instance, Havan wasn't doing this within himself. It was all done through the light dragon.

"I'm coming!"

Havan's movement accelerated. His strength and speed was on a different level!

Azell stabbed to stop his movement, yet Havan disappeared.

Too-ahhhhng!

Havan had exited the range of Azell's attack before Azell could complete his stab. Before Azell could turn his sword, Havan kicked off the ground, and he came towards Azell. He was traveling at terrifying speed.

"I'll end you!"

This was something he hadn't been able to do since the start of the fight. He struck out with a blow that held all the strength in his body. Azell's stance had been disrupted, so there was no way he could avoid it. Havan was sure of it.

When his sword reach its maximum speed, something unimaginable occurred.

'My god!'

Azell accelerated faster than the attack, and he jumped into Havan's guard. If Azell had gotten in the path of the sword, he

would have been cut into two. He had done something completely insane.

However, Azell didn't hesitate as he went past Havan. The exchange was brief, but Azell had bumped Havan by a minute amount as he went past. However, Havan's balance had completely crumbled under it.

"Koo-ahk!"

Havan followed through on his sword strike. He spun superbly through the air before he was planted into the ground. The beautiful trees in the surrounding broke like matchsticks, and a loud sound rang out.

Azell turned to look at him as he asked the question.

"You want to continue this?"

After a moment, an answer could be heard.

"...shit! I lost!"

Havan fumed as he got up.

It was a complete loss. He had attacked with the intent to kill, yet Azell had fought, while trying to spare his life. It showed the gulf between their skill level. He had no choice, but to accept this fact.

The blonde haired Dragon Majin woman walked towards him as she spoke.

"You are an idiot. You charged like a boar without realizing who your opponent is. You got what you deserved."

"Hmmph. Do you think I'm petty enough to take advice after I've already started my one on one fight?"

Havan jumped off the floor. If he had been a normal person, his body would have been broken into pieces by the impact. However, not a single bone was broken.

The Dragon Majin female massaged her forehead.

“Why the hell did I fall for such a man?”

“I’m sorry for intruding on a conversation between a married couple, but.....”

At that moment, Azell let out a bitter laugh as he butted into the conversation.

“Could you facilitate my meeting with Albatan?”

“You’ve passed the test given by our side, so we will do so. However, did you really need to go through all of this hassle? You are the hero Azell, who defeated the Dragon Demon king Atein.”

“You know who I am?”

“As expected, you are him. It is hard to believe, but you are the real deal.”

“...so you guessed it.”

At her reaction, Azell let out a bitter laugh. She put on a bright smile.

“I’ve heard a lot about you. My name is Mirnel.”

“I see. It has been such a long time, since I’ve been here. I didn’t think anyone at the edge of the forest would know me. I assumed my identity could only be proven to Albatan. Moreover, everyone just kept picking a fight with me....”

“Most of us don’t look kindly towards outsiders. Anyways, you are correct. The outer regions are under the stewardship of Hanerosa-nim and Libetan-nim. You probably do not know them.....”

“I don’t know, who those two are.”

“Libetan-nim was also present in the forest when you visited the forest in the past.”

“Yet I do not know him?”

Azell tilted his in confusion. When he came here to meet Albatan

in the past, he had made a ruckus that disturbed entire forest. Anyone that was worth their salt in the forest had come to fight him for two months. That was why he had met everyone that held influence within the forest.

Minerel had on a bright smile as she spoke.

“Libetan-nim is a Dragon, who acquired wisdom about 100 years ago.”

Azell was shocked at her words.

“There are other Dragons that acquired wisdom aside from Albatan?”

It was something that could happen at any moment. He knew it was a possibility, but he couldn't hide his shock when he found out that it actually had happened.

It was at that moment...

“Uh? The one to gain wisdom was Libetan? It wasn't Lacunda?”

At his words, everyone's gaze headed towards Yuren. Minerel and Havan looked at him with wary eyes. Minerel queried him.

“How do you know the name of Lecunda? How did you know Lecunda was a Dragon that was at the cusp of gaining wisdom?”

“Ah, that is.... There is someone that informs me of such things?”

Yuren let out an awkward laugh as he spoke. It was information that was given to him in his dream last night by the Guide. This was why he had unconsciously responded to their words. However, the reaction shown by Minerel and Havan was very severe. Minerel let out an overpowering energy. It was suffocating.

“Are you playing with me?”

“Wait a moment..”

Azell stopped her.

“He’s one of my companions, and he really does possess such an ability.”

“You really want me to believe that?”

“It can’t be helped if you don’t believe me..... Well, it’s just how it is. This guy receives weird information from his dreams.”

Azell shrugged his shoulders as he spoke.

“Anyways, please present us to Albatan.”

“Mmm.....”

Minerel glared at Azell with suspicion, but in the end, she let out a sigh.

“I’ll do so.”

10

It was as if Azell’s party hadn’t fought them for the past four days. There was no resistance as they headed straight towards the heart of the forest.

Minerel asked him a question.

“What are those things that are hiding in our surrounding?”

When the two of them had approached Azell’s party, the Guardian Shadows had hidden themselves completely. They had no idea about the existence of the Guardian Shadows. However, they were now able to see glimpses of the Guardian Shadows from between the trees, and they were becoming worried.

Azell answered her.

“They call themselves the Guardian Shadows. If no one attacks me, they won’t become hostile.”

“What if they worry me?”

“It can’t be helped. Did Albatan give you the power to expel me depending on your judgment?”

At his words, Minerel put on a coy expression. Havan scratched his head.

“Albatan-nim and the other elders probably knew all about this, yet they sent us as envoys. I have no idea why.”

“I think you are right. They are cantankerous old men.”

Minerel agreed with Havan’s words. The elders had been snickering as they sent the two of them as envoys. It seemed they some ulterior motive in doing so. Was this the reason why?

Azell let out a bitter laugh.

“I believe you are right. Albatan is highly proficient in magic, so there is no way our presence wasn’t known to him.”

If it wasn’t Albatan, the act of checking up on Azell through the Magic Eye wasn’t even work. However, there had been so many observation type magic on their party, since they entered the forest. He had no idea which one was being used by Albatan.....

Suddenly, Minerel asked a question.

“So why do you want to meet him?”

“Some unknown being arranged it?”

“What do you mean by that?”

“It’ll be a bit difficult to explain all of this to you... I also have to get the full story from Albatan....”

Azell let out a bitter laugh.

When he decided to come here, there hadn’t been some crucial reason behind his decision. He just wanted to meet someone from the past that knew him, and he had wanted to hear what had happened.

However, as he followed the instructions of Yuren’s guide, it became crucial for him to come to this place. The problem remained that he had no idea why he had to come here until he

met Albatan.

“However.....”

Suddenly, Kairen turned to look at Havan as he asked a question.

“When you were fighting Azell, you used something called the Dragon Soul. What is it?”

“You want us to talk about our secret technique to outsiders?”

“Ah. Now that I think about it, I’m being rude. I’m sorry.”

Recently, Azell didn’t hold back in supplying Kairen with information. Leticia also didn’t hesitate in exchanging techniques, and he had gotten used to it. He had forgotten the mindset of most traditional martial artists regarding sharing information. Kairen acknowledged his fault as he gave an apology.

Havan smirked.

“It seems you do have some manners. I cannot speak about such things without the consent of the elders. Please do not speak any further about that subject.”

“I’ll be careful.”

Havan spoke in a threatening manner, but Kairen knew he was the one at fault. This was why he didn’t take any offense as he accepted Havan’s words.

Suddenly, Minerel stopped in front of a spring with a large boulder in the middle of it.

“I’ve called someone that’ll heal you guys. Your wounded members will slow us down, and it would take us several days to reach our destination at this pace.”

“Do you have someone that can heal us? Do you have a healer?”

Azell asked in puzzlement. This was obvious, but there hadn’t been one 220 years ago. At the time, only the priests from the temples could use the healing art, and there hadn’t been any

priests here.

Mirnel shook her head.

“No. Unfortunately, we do not have any hearlers here. However, there is someone with the ability to heal.”

“Is it an ability of a Dragon weapon?”

Several heroes acknowledged by Albatan carried Dragon weapons. However, 220 years had passed, and there were probably beings like Havan, who used this mysterious technique called Dragon Soul instead of a Dragon weapon.....

‘The woman called Minerel seems to use a similar technique as him.....’

From her outer appearance, Minerel looked to be of the same age as Kairen. By that age, she probably could have made her own Dragon weapon if she had diligently studied the Dragon Arts from a young age.

However, Azell decided she was a user of the Dragon Soul. The energy emanating from her body felt similar to Havan.

Soon, he could feel someone approaching them from the opposite side. Azell instantly could tell this being was a Dragon Demon, and he felt something strange.

‘Is it someone I know?’

The feel of this Dragon Demon magic wasn’t unfamiliar.

‘It is to be expected. I’m sure a lot of beings from the time I visited here survived...’

Azell was having such thought when he caught sight of a figure. He became puzzled before he became surprised. It was as if he had seen a ghost.

The middle aged Dragon Demon male was refined. He had neatly trimmed black hair, and he possessed a stylish long beard. His eyes were red, and two black obsidian-like horns curved towards the

sky. There was a red Dragon stone on the back of his hand. It was the same color as his eyes.

“How can you.....”

The Dragon Demon male looked puzzled as he looked at Azell. Azell's eyes widened when he recognized the Dragon Demon in front of him..

“Are you perhaps..... Aren't you the Simpleton Prince?”

At his words, the Dragon Demon let out a bitter laugh. The laughter held surprise, but he didn't sound too happy. He spoke with a voice that revealed that he was feeling complex emotions at that moment.

“It has been a long time since I've heard that insulting nickname.”

He was Dragon Demon Atein's son, and the father of Niberis. It was Saibein.

Chapter 164 - The Wise Dragon (1)

1

Saibein was officially declared missing from the Plain of Darkness around 20 years ago.

He went missing after he fought against the Guardian Shadows within the Rulain Kingdom. No one knew why he had gone there, and his fate had become a mystery.

The Plain of Darkness was dogged in their search for him, and they were able to find where he had gone. This resulted in Niberis inheriting his Dragon weapon, but she had been unable to make contact with him.

This was the extent of the story he had heard from Laura.

Azell spoke.

“...you’ve aged. I guess it is to be expected since a significant amount of time has passed.”

Azell couldn’t immediately recognize Saibein, because he had aged in the past 220 years. During the Dragon Demon war, he had looked like a young man. In terms of human age, Saibein currently looked as if he was in his late 40s or early 50s. He had cut his long hair, and he had grown a beard. He looked completely different.

Saibein spoke.

“You really are.... You look exactly as you did in the past. It is almost unbelievable. How is it possible for a human to do this? How are you still alive?”

For a brief moment, Saibein became suspicious. He wondered if the man in front of him was the descendant of the original Azell. However, how could his descendant recognize Sabein, who had aged?

Azell spoke.

“I’m not obligated to answer your questions.”

“That is true. However, I did come here to heal your comrades. Could you take that into consideration and answer my questions? Since we are meeting in this place, I believe we are no longer enemies.”

“...the Simpleton Prince I knew didn’t have such a flexible personality. It seems a lot has changed over the years.”

Azell let out a bitter laugh.

From what he remembered, Saibein had been obsessed with honor, and he had been inflexible during all negotiations. He also thirsted for fame, so he did a lot of idiotic things.... The leadership group of the human alliance had been thankful for his existence, since Saibein had been very predictable. It seems his personality had gone through a lot of change over the past 200 years.

Azell spoke.

“I slept for a long time to alleviate the curse put on me by your father. I’ve woken up recently.”

“Are you talking about a hibernation?”

“It is fair to make that comparison.”

“How could a human go into hibernation? How can this be?”

“It was through a very profound magic. Atein used magic to revive the dead. Is it really surprising that I went into slumber for the past 220 years?”

“Of course, it is surprising. When you are referencing the raising of the dead, who are you talking about? By the way you phrased it, you aren’t talking about an Undead.....”

Azell was baffled by his words.

“...didn’t you hold a high position in the Plain of Darkness before you went missing? How come you don’t know anything?”

“After I came here, I cut off all contacts with the Plain of Darkness. Aside from the time I gave my Dragon weapon to my daughter.....”

“So you are saying you cut off contact way before Almarick was revived?”

“Sir Almarick?”

Saibein became surprised, but his expression turned serious soon.

“If that is true.... It seems the time of my father’s revival is approaching.”

“.....”

He was the same now as in the old days. He was the Simpleton Prince. Azell watched his earnest reaction, and it confirmed that he didn’t know any important information even though he was the prince.

Saibein let out a sigh.

“I want to hear many stories from you, but this isn’t the place to do so. Still, Albatan-nim is quite mean. He sent me here with no prior information.”

“He always had a playful personality. It seems that hasn’t changed.”

Azell spoke as he thought about the past.

When he came here before in the past, Atein and his party had arrived in the forest right after him. The Dragon hadn’t explained anything to either side, so the two sides had almost fought when they came across each other. At the time, Azell and Carlos had wanted to smack the smirk off of the Dragon’s face.

Havan and Minerel had been sent as envoys without any background information. Afterwards, Saibein was in the dark as he was sent to heal them. It seemed the Dragon’s personality hadn’t

changed.

Saibein spoke.

“We should start the treatment...”

Sabein's expression turned peculiar when he looked over the faces of Azell's party members. He looked closely at Laura as he spoke.

“Miss, are you perhaps from the Aunsaurus tribe?”

“Yes..”

Laura answered him. Saibein went missing before Laura made her public appearance, so they hadn't met before. However, Laura had inherited all the characteristics that identified her as a descendant of Aunsaurus.

He asked in puzzlement.

“Why is someone from the Aunsaurus tribe with Azell?”

“I betrayed them.”

“.....”

“I'm not sure if you are aware of this fact, but our elders are the worst.”

“...mmmm.”

Saibein murmured to himself. She was so frank in her admission of betrayal that Saibein lost his train of thought for a brief moment.

“It seems the number of stories I want to hear from all of you have grown. However.... Let's heal you first.”

He closed his eyes as he concentrated. A powerful wave of Dragon Demon magic emanated from him.

-Dragon Soul release!

He was also using the technique called the Dragon Soul.

However, there was a clear difference between the Dragon Soul of Havan and Saibein.

The silhouette of a Dragon wrapped around his body, but it wasn't made out of light. It was made out of pitch black darkness, and it was crawling over his body.

It really was an ominous sight.

Azell queried.

"I'm asking just to be sure...."

"What is it?"

"...are you sure you took that out with the intent to heal us?"

"What if I did?"

"....."

It didn't look like it no matter how one looked at the Dragon Soul. His party members felt the same way about it.

Saibein spoke.

"I know what you are trying to say, but it is true that my Dragon Soul's ability deals with healing. However, the source of my magical energy is darkness, so it looks like this."

"Mmm....."

"It is made from magical energy of darkness, but this is nothing like the black magic where one has to take life energy to heal a patient. You also don't have to worry about any side effects. I confirmed all of this through experimentation. I promise upon my honor."

"It is hard to believe you just by looking at its outer appearance, but.... I'll trust you for now."

"I heard humans bow by getting on their knees. I guess this is my lot in life now."

Saibein grumbled as he approached the party members. He put

out his hands towards Laura

“I’ll start with the miss. May you hold my hands?”

“...yes.”

Larua looked a bit tense as she followed his direction. The Dragon of darkness surrounding Saibein was emitting an intense power. One needed a good amount of courage to expose one’s hands to it.

However, when she grabbed his hands, it unexpectedly didn’t feel too out of the ordinary. It was as if she was dipping her hands into water.

Oooooooooohng.....

Afterwards, the Dark Dragon twitched as it expanded. The darkness deepened further, and it completely encased his body, and it encircled Laura, who was holding his hands.

Azell queried Minerel.

“Will this really be ok?”

“I understand why you are worried, but his healing ability is considered to be one of the best in our forest. It hadn't been too long since he awakened his Dragon Soul, but it is an excellent ability. You can relax.”

“Mmmm.....”

Even after hearing her words, he wanted the dragon of darkness crawl around in front of him. He was unable to relax. He tried to expand his sense to see what was occurring inside, but he couldn’t penetrate the darkness. He had no idea what was going on.

He remained frustrated as he waited for around 10 minutes.

Two people appeared as the darkness retreated.

“Laura.”

Laura still held Saibein’s hands, and her eyes were closed. When

Azell called her name, she broke out of the trance, and she opened her eyes.

Soon, she looked down at her body with surprise.

“...I’m completely healed.”

“What?”

“Is this true?”

Kairen and Yuren queried as if they couldn’t believe it.

Laura had been severely wounded. She had been treated by a high ranking black magician by injecting life energy into her. However, she needed time to completely recover. However, Saibein had healed her in around 5 minutes.

Laura mumbled to herself.

“It felt as if I was taking a comfortable nap, but I never expected such results.....”

“This was possible, because your Dragon Demon magic is strong. This won’t be as effective against a wounded civilian. However, as a cost, your Dragon Demon magic was changed into life energy, so your Energy Pulse should be close to empty right now.”

After hearing Saibein’s words, Laura checked her own status. Her magical energy had bottomed out. However, it was akin to her using her magical energy in an intense manner. It didn’t evoke a tortuous feeling of tiredness. A pleasant drowsiness washed over her.

Saibein spoke.

“All of you have strong magical energy, so the healing process will go easier. Who’s the next patient?”

2

Saibein’s surprising healing ability allowed the party members to recover to their normal state within the hour.

Everyone except Laura was unable to recover fully. Saibein explained why.

“As I’ve said before, the healing effect becomes stronger depending on the strength of my patient's Dragon Demon magic. When humans and Dragon Majin takes the power of a Dragon through the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, the body recovers through the absorption of the power. The concept is analogous to what I did.”

When one won and imbibed the Dragon’s power through the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, one’s body strengthened in a gradual manner. However, the recovery happened almost instantaneously. Saibein’s healing ability copied this concept.

In the case of Laura, her supply of Dragon Demon magic had been low thanks to her grievous injuries. However, she possessed the Dragon weapon Vitan’s Chalice within her. Saibein was able to pull out her reserve power to instantly heal her wounds.

By comparison, Kairen and Leticia didn’t possess any Dragon weapons. Since their body was a mess, their Energy Pulse was also a mess. They could only use 20% of their normal Dragon Demon magic, so the result of their healing process was weak compared to Laura.

In the case of Yuren, he was a human, and he hadn’t gone through the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual. However, he had practiced the training method left behind by Carlos. This was why there was a hint of Dragon Demon magic within him. Still, one couldn’t expect much result with Yuren.

Saibein spoke.

“The two of them will be at full health tomorrow. The human youth will take around four days. It seems you are a black magician, but you should refrain from using the stolen life energy. You’ll develop side effects.”

“Understood.”

Yuren nodded his head without making a fuss. Yuren had experienced the healing effects, and he knew Saibein was a more skilled black magician than him. This was why he had no ill feeling when he was given the warning.

Azell express his surprise.

“It is an amazing ability. Did you give up your Dragon weapon to your daughter, because you gain this ability?”

“No. One cannot gain a Dragon Soul if one possesses a Dragon weapon.”

“Mmmm?”

“Please understand that I am not allowed to talk more on this subject. You are all outsiders. If you want to hear more about it, you’ll have to receive permission from Albatan-nim.”

“You are saying I should ask my questions later.”

“I’m also refraining myself from asking you questions. Ah. Do you perhaps know if my daughter is fine?”

“At the very least, she was alive couple days ago.”

“That means.... You fought my daughter.”

“That’s right..”

Azell knew he could be buying Saibein’s enmity, but he didn’t hide the truth.

During the Dragon Demon war, they had been enemies that were unable to stand each other. Even if Azell had slept for a long time, it wasn’t as if his enmity towards Saibein had disappeared.

Saibein lived through the entirety of the 220 years, but he might also be having a hard time erasing his hatred towards Azell. Moreover, the Dragon Demon war didn’t feel too far behind for Azell.

Saibein let out a sigh after he looked at Azell for a brief moment.

“...all right. Let’s resolve that problem at a later time. Follow me. Albatan-nim wanted to meet you all.”

“The heart of the forest is still far away.... Will we be able to arrive there by today?”

“It is possible.”

“How?”

Albatan forest was about the same size as the Iellos Kingdom. If their whole party was healthy, they might be able to do it. However, it wasn’t a distance that could be travelled with the wounded.

However, Saibein was sure of himself.

“How did you think I arrived here as soon as I was contacted?”

“Do you have a Dragon weapon that can bridge space?”

“Is isn’t a Dragon weapon, but it is something that can do what you described.”

“What is it?”

Saibein spoke as he enjoyed seeing Azell’s frustrated reaction.

“Road of Emptiness.”

Chapter 165 - The Wise Dragon (2)

3

The Road of Emptiness existed within the Demonic land of Albatan.

It was something Laura, Yuren and Leticia didn't know about. In truth, there was an independent Road of Emptiness present here. It was separate from the Road of Emptiness controlled by the Plain of Darkness.

"I was told my father installed it here as a gesture of goodwill towards Albatan-nim."

Saibein spoke.

There weren't that many waypoints, but it really was of big help when one wanted to travel across the vast Albatan forest.

Azell couldn't suppress his surprise.

"It is an unbelievably useful facility. It really annoys me that you guys can use it to your heart's content."

If the Road of Emptiness didn't exist, the party wouldn't have been in as deep of a hole as they were in right now. Even if one could identify the location and destination of the party, time was needed to mobilize a force. Since their party was small in number, they should have been able to lose their trackers easily by fluidly changing directions.

'As expected, I have to destroy it'

In the past, he didn't want to reveal his location, so he had left the Road of Emptiness alone. However, the Vitan's Chalice made it impossible for him to hide his whereabouts. It would be beneficial for him to steal their preternatural mobility by destroying all the Road of Emptiness.

"How long will it take to move the next set of people?"

Azell's party consisted of four members. There were three from the forest including Saibein.

There were a total of seven of them, so they had to use the Road of Emptiness twice. The number restriction was four.

Saibein spoke.

"It normally takes around 10 minutes."

"Hmmm....."

After a short amount of time had passed, the rest of the party was moved.

Kairen expressed his amazement.

"When I heard the name, Road of Emptiness, I thought I would have to roam around the darkness. I just entered it, and I just popped out at the other end. Amazing."

This waypoint for the Road of Emptiness was made with the same architecture and metallic material that was the propriety of the Plain of Darkness. There were magical etchings on the border as the structure slowly rotated in place. There was an darkness of unmeasurable depths at the center.

When one entered from one side, one's vision would darken for a brief moment before one's surrounding would change. It was an extraordinary device.

"Follow me."

Saibein took the lead as he started to walk.

When they exited the waypoint for the Road of Emptiness, they caught sight of a lake. There were houses nearby the lake. These houses were made out of a mixture of wood and stone. The several dozen houses looked as if they were made to be part of the large trees that sparsely populated the lake.

"When I came here last time, they didn't use stone..... It seems things have changed."

“Is that so? It probably is the influence of outsiders like me.”

This place was called the heart of the demonic land, but it was the size of a small village. There were less than 200 houses here, and the population didn't exceed 1,000.

Still, the whole party was tense.

It was in response to the Dragon Demons and Dragon Majins present here. There were almost an equal amount of them compared to the human residents here.

‘This is amazing.’

Kairen expressed his surprise.

There were Dragon Demons and Dragon Majins present, but this didn't mean they were all combatants. It was true that they were born with superior physical capabilities and magical energy, but each of them held different interests like the humans. They chose to do what interested them.

Still, Kairen couldn't help but feel threatened when he saw a large concentration of Dragon Majins and Dragon Demons. By the feel of the wave of Dragon Demon magic being emitted by them, there were many here that were cultivating magic or the Dragon Arts.

Suddenly, Yuren spoke.

“There are a lot of children here.”

He wasn't talking about the human children. There were a lot of Dragon Demon and Dragon Majin children. Everyone looked at the party with curious eyes.

Kairen spoke.

“There really is.... There's a surprisingly high number of them here.”

In human society, it was very rare to see a Dragon Demon or a Dragon Majin. This was why Kairen had never seen this many

Dragon Majin and Dragon Demon children before. It was more than the total number of children he had seen throughout his life.

Yuren let out a bitter laugh.

“It isn’t that surprising.....”

“Mmm? What do you mean?”

“The worshippers of the Dragon Demon race continue to have children to replenish their forces. The facility I grew up in had a lot of children.”

“.....”

“At least, these children were born into a happy environment.”

A bitter hurt stabbed into Yuren’s chest. He thought about the children he had been unable to rescue.

Saibein turned to look at him.

“You.... Were you part of our organization?”

“I betrayed them.”

“.....”

“If we are being frank, it is hard to find something good about the organization.”

“Mmmm.....”

From Saibein’s point of view, he was at a loss for words. After the Dragon Demon war, he had scraped together the remnants of the army. He was one of the main figures that had created the current organization.

He let out a bitter laugh as he spoke.

“I can't deny what you are saying. I’m here, because of that.....”

Suddenly, Azell became curious as to why Saibein had left the Plain of Darkness. It seemed he still held affection for his daughter, Niberis. Why was he living here in hiding after cutting off all

communication with the Plain of Darkness?

“We have a lot to talk about, but.....”

Saibein stopped after reaching the northern end of the town. He spoke as he moved to the side of the road.

“We’ll speak about it at a later time after you meet Albatan-nim. Go, Azell.”

“I’ll do so.”

At the northern end of the town, the lakeshore led into the ridge of a mountain. Azell remembered the location of Albatan’s dwelling. It seemed the dragon hadn’t moved. Azell went up the mountain road with his comrades.

4

While they were climbing up the mountain road, they felt a pressure mount. Everyone in his party was somewhat familiar with this feeling.

‘There is a dragon on the other side.’

Everyone could feel this truth.

There was a dearth of Dragon Demons and Dragon Majin in town. They were only several hundred meters away, yet a much larger presence could be felt from the other side.

Kairen queried.

“What kind of Dragon is Albatan?”

“He is basically a winged dragon.”

“Basically?”

“He was a winged dragon until he gained his wisdom. Now he is a dragon that common sense cannot be applied. It is useless to discuss what type of dragon he is. This is why you should erase all preconceptions you have regarding dragons.”

Soon, the party arrived at the summit of the mountain. Aside

from Azell, everyone was unable to hide their shock.

It was enormous.

Of course, all dragons were large. However, the dragon that was looking down at them as it perched on top of the peak was..... It was bigger than any Dragon they had seen before.

Normally, flying dragons were on the smaller size compared to the other Dragons. Usually the smaller Dragons were 20 meters long from the head to their tail. The large ones were usually 40 meters long. It was rare to see a flying dragon that was over 30 meters long. However, the dragon in front of them was a flying dragon, yet it was at least 60 meters long.

‘Is that really a flying dragon?’

Kairen couldn’t believe what he was seeing, so he carefully observed the dragon. It had large wings, and an sleek body. Then there was the white scales that had a bluish sheen..... It was most definitely a flying dragon.

The flying dragon suddenly grinned.

The party members became startled. It was from a completely different species, yet it was as if a playful old man was laughing at them. Its emotion could be clearly read through its expression.

In the next moment, something more amazing occurred. The dragon opened its jaws, and it started to speak in the language of humans. The dragon was precise and clear with its speech.

“It has been a while. Should I call you Azell Zestringer or sir Azell Karzark? Which do you prefer?”

“You can call me whatever you like. You can just call me Azell. Albatan, has your growth period ended?”

Azell smirked as he replied. Albatan raised its front paw to scratch its cheek. It was such a human-like gesture that everyone stared at Albatan with a dumbfounded expression on their faces.

“I think so. I don’t think I’ll get any bigger.”

“Your power seems to have grown.”

“I don’t think the growth period for my power has ended yet.”

The resonance of power flowing out of Albatan was subdued. However, there was heavy weight to it. One could guess that an incredible amount of power dwelled within its enormous body.

Suddenly, Albatan lowered its body, and the party saw a pose that was more amazing than the one before. It bent its arms as it placed its elbows on the ground. Then it propped its chin on its paws.

“Huh huh huh.....”

Each of its movement was so surreal that it was as if they were in a dream. Kairen let out a laugh that sounded forced.

Albatan laughed as if it enjoyed seeing such reactions.

“This is interesting. I knew you would visit me someday, but now that you are here, I’m very surprised. You are a human, yet you haven’t changed much through the years.”

“I was also surprised.... It is good to see you.”

After he had woken up, Albatan was one of the few beings left that had known Azell in the past.

Azell had been thrown into this era. It felt as if he was a ghost from the past. This was why he had been delighted to see Reygus and Almarick. It was also why he didn’t react with hostility when he met Saibein.

These beings remembered the era Azell had lived through. They recognized him, and it was a joy to talk about those times. Azell couldn’t hide the happiness and excitement he was feeling right now.

“Do you know why I am here?”

“I heard you slept like the dead for the past 220 years. I do sleep occasionally, but I’ve never slept past 20 years. It is amazing to see a human sleep so much. Now that you are a loner with no friends, are you expecting me to introduce you to a nice girl?”

“...your knowledge about humans have really broadened.”

Azell grumbled.

He queried the dragon.

“How did you know I was asleep for a long time?”

“In terms of how humans keep track of time, Carlos Rizester looked me up a long time ago. He told me about you. He said he’ll stay at Laus, and he’ll be waiting for you.”

“Hmmm.....”

“If you want permission to go to Laus, you can do whatever you want. That is also what I told Carlos Rizester.”

“What happened to Carlos?”

“That is a question you can answer by going to see him.”

“I know that, but.....”

“He was in a state where it would have been difficult for him to live amongst humans. That is all I’ll say on the subject. He became a being that might explode one day like a volcano.”

“I’m not sure what you are trying to say.”

“You’ll find out once you go there yourself. It isn't something that interests me. Moreover, Carlos Rizester probably wants to reveal everything to you himself.”

“I think so too.”

Azell let out a sigh.

There were too many things he wanted to ask when he met Carlos again.

At the same time, he was afraid to meet Carlos.

Carlos was his best friend, yet Azell was afraid to meet him again....

It was absurd. Azell had been severed from all his relationships from the past, and he was sent far into the future. The fact that Carlos was still here was a precious miracle.

Still, he was afraid.

After he received his Dragon weapons from the Keepers of Prophecy, he met Carlos through a dream that had been arranged by him. Afterwards, Azell was swept up by a foreboding premonition. It felt as if something would come to an end if he met Carlos. It was only a hunch, but.....

Albatan spoke.

“I know why you are here. Someone told you to visit me, right?”

“That is correct. Could you tell me who that someone is?”

“I can’t.”

“Was it Carlos?”

“You’ll have to find that out for yourself.”

“.....”

“I’ve also made a promise, so I cannot speak about it.”

“Then.....”

Azell took a deep breath before he spoke once again.

“What are you going to give me?”

Chapter 166 - The Wise Dragon (3)

“You speak as if you are here to pick up something left behind for you.”

“Am I wrong?”

“There is something. As expected, you are too perceptive. It isn’t fun to make fun of you.”

“How can I measure up to Carlos?”

“That’s true.”

Albatan smirked as he spoke.

“Tell me about what you have learned along the way here. After you woke up, what have you learned about the world that has changed..... I need to know the whole story then I’ll know what I need to tell you.”

“Mmmm.....”

Azell took a brief moment to think about it.

What truths had he learned?

He knew how the Dragon Demon king worshippers were reshaping the world.

He learned about the truth behind the great tragedy called the Great Darkness.

He found out about the Guardian Shadows. He found out about their true identity and mission.

He learned about the identity of the Demon race.

Albatan spoke after he heard Azell’s story.

“Hmm. It seems you know the most of the story. Then I’ll have to tell you the back story.”

“Back story?”

“It is as that Demon, Balserk, had said. There is something fundamentally wrong with the structure of this world. Azell, you told him that you were indifferent to this. In reality, it is an important problem.”

“Why? Even without that factor, the world is.....”

“From the perspective of humans, the world is a mess. However, such perspective is limited. You are looking at the problem from within the civilization created by the humanity. You are looking at problems that should be solved between humans. It doesn't matter if these types of problems repeats itself or if it is fixed. Every being that lives as a group forms a unique structure, and problems naturally arises from such arrangements. However, there is still a problem that remains even when we pull back from such micro perspective. In this land, I made it so that the humans on the outside won't be able to covet.....”

“You were attempting to prevent the species of this world from dying out. Didn't you tell me that before?”

“That's right. Humanity rose in power, and this also meant there were losers in this world. The result came about, because the ability to cooperate between humans were an advantage they held over the other species. Of course, there are other factors that led to their rise. It would probably take me four days and four nights to tell you my analysis. However, you aren't a good partner to have such conversations with.”

“...I'm sorry for not being much of an intellectual.”

Azell grumbled. Albatan was a wise Dragon, and at the same time, he was a magician that had learned profound magic techniques. Carlos was of the same ilk as the Dragon. In the past, Carlos had left Azell behind to have a conversation with the Dragon that lasted deep into the night.

Albatan laughed.

“It is more fun to have a conversation with magicians. After I end my conversation with Azell, would the human magician and the Dragon Majin girl keep me company?”

“Ah... Of course.”

“It will be an honor.”

Laura and Yuren were taken aback, but they accepted Albatan’s offer.

“Hmm. Where was I? I believe I was talking about why I established my demonic land.”

After he answered his own question, Albatan continued to speak.

“There were also losers amongst the humans that were being culled. I thought it was too cruel for a species to be exterminated just because they lost the fight. It would have been great if humans could demonstrate forbearance as beings that possessed wisdom. It would have been great if humans could coexist with them.... Unfortunately, this is not the case.”

“...I see.”

It was an undeniable truth. Humans were creatures that wouldn’t hesitate to kill those that are different from them. The reason could be geological or cultural in nature.

“I created a land where the others could continue to live. I created a fence, and I cannot guarantee it will last. Maybe, I’m doing this out of self-gratification, but isn’t there some worth if I can create several hundred years of history?”

Albatan ignored the conflict between the several factions within the forest. The law of the jungle was the foundation, but the forest did have other rules. There were premises that were held above all others.

When an outside force tries to invade their land, all conflicts within the factions are forgotten. They had to face their enemies

with one heart.

A species couldn't be wiped out no matter what.

These were the two ironclad laws that were held up by the residents of the Albatan Forest.

Albatan spoke.

“The problem regarding the Demon race is also a problem that is outside the border lines. Do you mind if I go into a fairly long story?”

“Aren't you just going to tell me anyways?”

“That is true. I'm not going to give you the right to refuse.”

Albatan let out a playful laughter.

5

“The Demon race occupied a world they considered to be hell, and they were severed from our world. However, distortions of unknown origin cropped up at various locations of the world. It started happening in the distant past. Every distortion allowed a Demon to step into this world.”

The Demons that were able to manifest in this world desperately tried to find someone they could converse with. There was no desire that was greater to them.

However, most of their attempts bore no fruit. They were dragged back to hell before they were able to encounter anyone they could converse with.

How long did they continue these attempts?

Finally, a Demon that had a slightly different idea appeared.

“The Demons didn't seek to do this initially.....”

When the Demons stepped into the real world, there were always no humans around. Moreover, they were on a time limit, so they desperately searched their surrounding. However, there wasn't a

trace of human around. The reason was very simple.

Dragons were nearby.

“This was a time where magic still didn’t exist. Of course, the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual didn’t exist either.”

This was why the relationship between humans and Dragons differed in the past. The relationship was one-sided. It was simply a predator and prey relationship. The territory of the Dragons were much larger back then, and humans dared not intrude within their habitat.

“They had been given a miraculous opportunity to meet humans, but they were unable to meet any humans. They were devastated by this fact, so they attempted to communicate with the Dragons.”

It was more of a desperation than curiosity. The Demons knew it wouldn’t work, but they wanted to take a shot in the dark..

However, this attempt resulted in a surprising result.

“Maybe, it was possible, because they didn’t possess a real body? The Demons were more active and successful in communicating with the Dragons than the humans.”

It was as if the Demons were able to lend their ability to think to the Dragons. The Dragons had been dull tyrants, yet they surprisingly became lucid. They were able to communicate and converse with the Demons.

It was a miraculous event for both the Dragons and Demons.

Dragons pined for wisdom, and Demons thirsted for conversation. Their wishes were realized.

However, the Dragons were dull beings. It was as if there was a constant fog within their head. They had many questions when they looked at the world, but the answers to these questions always seemed to slip away. Their thoughts failed to develop under the mental fog. Their frustration with their inability to answer their

own questions grew stronger every time they met the human-like beings. These feelings began to mount, and it reached a point where they couldn't hold back their frustration anymore. They went on a rampage.

“Wait a moment.”

Yuren interrupted the story. Albatan turned to look at him.

“What is it?”

“If it is as elder had said... Ah, do you mind if I call you by that title?”

“You may.”

“Yes. So.... Do Dragons have the ability to read mental images of humans?”

There was a theory amongst magicians that said Dragons had the ability to read the mental images of a person. However, this couldn't be confirmed unless one could converse with a Dragon.

‘I have the chance to do so right now!’

As a magician, he was itching to confirm this theory.

Albatan let out a bright smile. Th party was once again surprised by the fact that the Dragon's smile could express a variety of emotions.

“If I'm to be precise, we are able to read the mental images of all living beings. It isn't exclusive to humans. Moreover, it isn't as if I'm reading it, because I want to read it.... It just flows in. When humans think hard on something, they send out a mental wave that doesn't dissipate easily. This is why such mental waves come to us even through vast distances.”

The Dragons couldn't look into their mind. A mental wave flowed out of a person when one had a thought. Dragons had the natural ability to read these mental waves.

“So that is the reason why Dragons pine for wisdom.”

“Correct.”

If a being didn't know what wisdom was, how could one pine for wisdom? It would be a very strange occurrence.

Dragons knew what wisdom was.

When they received the thoughts that leaked out of humans, they could experience the mental images from the perspective of the person, who possessed wisdom. However, this experience lasted only for a moment. Wisdom sparked in the minds of Dragons for a brief moment as if a light had been illuminated within their minds. However, this light was extinguished in an instant, and the Dragons inevitably developed a want for this light.

Yuren was astonished.

“So this is why Dragons go on a rampage.....”

Dragons were fundamentally reluctant to enter into human territory. They did so for the possibility of earning wisdom through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

However, there were times when the Dragons went on a rampage in human settlement. No one had known what precipitated these events.....

‘Their stress mounts before they explode.’

Even humans went into fits of rage when their frustration mounted. The call of the wild was strong within the Dragon, and this meant that their self-control was weaker than humans. It was very natural for them to lose control.

Suddenly, Azell asked a question.

“When we came here last.... Didn't Carlos ask about this truth?”

From what Azell understood, Carlos had let the theory of Dragons being able to read mental images of humans remain as being a theory. Azell knew Carlos' personality well, so there was no way he wouldn't have asked Albatan about it.....

Albatan answered him.

“He did ask the question, but I couldn’t give him a clear answer. At that time, I didn’t know the answer to Carlos’ questions.”

“I see.”

Albatan had acquired wisdom, but this didn’t mean he had learned everything to do with the world. He continuously yearned for knowledge, so he investigated the unknown.

“Let’s continue my story.”

Albatan continued his story.

The Dragons and the Demons had gained what they had desired. However, their gain was like a daydream. They could wake up from it at any moment.

The Demon race desperately squeezed out their knowledge. They didn't want this miracle to go to waste. They wanted to make something whole no matter the cost.

Fortunately, the Dragons felt the same way as them.

The two sides were sharing wisdom, and before this miraculous time could come to an end, they came up with an idea. They wanted to extend this time indefinitely, so they took a gambit that would allow both sides to exist in one place.

It was a merging of Dragons, who possessed a body, and the formless Demons.

Albatan continued to speak.

“This was how a being with no parents walked this earth. This being defined himself as being a Dragon Demon, and he named himself as Atein.”

This was how the Dragon Demon race was born.

Albatan’s story continued.

“Azell, you are pretty knowledgeable about the 1st generation of the Dragon Demon race.”

“I believe so.”

Most of them had been his enemies.... Still, he had shared conversations with numerous 1st generation Dragon Demons.

“Atein was the first Dragon Demon, but he wasn’t the last. Afterwards, more Dragon Demons appeared on the surface of this world, and the bloodline of the Dragon Demon was propagated.”

Atein had known his own name, and he knew the desire of the Dragons and the Demons that gave rise to his birth.

However, he couldn’t remember anything else.

Amongst the Demon race, there were very few that knew the process in which one became a Demon. Most Demons didn’t remember their prior memories. Many Demons didn’t even realize they had been humans once before.

This loss of memories occurred once again in the process of becoming a Dragon Demon.

“From the moment Atein walked on this world, he felt a powerful desire to find out more about himself.”

Not all 1st generation Dragon Demons had been like Atein. Azell was well aware of this fact. For example, Reshoo didn’t care about the Demons or Dragons.

Anyways, Atein had a fervent desire to learn, so he wandered the world to find clues. As he did so, he became cognizant of his own abilities. He conducted countless experiments to bring out his potential.

“This resulted in the discipline of magic and Dragon Arts forming.... In the process of transferring this knowledge to humans, Spirit Order was born.”

“He really was the first magician. However, I never expected him

to have made the Dragon Arts and the Spirit Order too.....”

Azell was astonished.

Wasn't Atein really the main character of a mythology?

However, Azell didn't deny or become suspicious of this truth. From Azell's perspective, it sounded like the truth.

Albatan laughed as he spoke. It seemed he was enjoying this.

Chapter 167 - The Wise Dragon (4)

“Of course, this doesn’t mean he made everything in this world by himself. He was the founder of magic and the Dragon Arts, but many new possibilities were pioneered when these disciplines were spread across the world. This holds true when one considers the emergence of the necromancers, the birth of the Undead, and the Dragon weapons.”

“The Dragon weapons aren’t the work of Atein? That is very unexpected....”

“When I heard it from Atein, I was a bit surprised too. However, it seems a female Dragon Demon, who was Atein’s distant descendant, created the Dragon weapon. According to Atein.... If we are to go by human history, it was during the era of the Five Star kingdom.”

“.....”

For a brief moment, a silence descended amongst them.

Kairen was struck dumb as he asked the question.

“The Five Star kingdom.... Isn’t that over 3,000 years ago?”

It was an era where paper and ink didn’t exist. The record of the kingdom was carved in hieroglyphics on a clay tablet..... It was so long ago that historians argued with each other as to what it was like to live in that era.

Albatan spoke.

“It was way before I was hatched from my egg.”

“Excuse me, but how old are you.....”

“I’m not sure. I’m pretty sure I’ve been alive for over a thousand years.”

It was assumed that Dragons had a lifespan of several thousand years. They were so long-lived that they outlasted nations, yet they

rarely stayed in contact with humans and other creatures. This was why it was hard to determine a Dragon's age even if there was a record of their existence.

Albatan couldn't remember his life before he gained his wisdom. This was why he didn't know his own age.

“Anyways, I'm in my early youth compared to Atein.”

“.....”

“Early youth.....”

Everyone was dumbfounded as they stared at Albatan. Albatan let out a sly laughter as he continued speaking.

“Anyways, Atein's activities paved the way for other 1st generation Dragon Demons to come into existence.”

The process had only been a conjecture even for Atein.

When he conducted activities all over the world, the Demon race naturally paid attention to him. Atein tracked down the information regarding the cause and effect of his own existence. He was finally able to find out about his origin.

“Opportunities were hard to come by, but when they arose, the Demon race tried to recreate what happened in the past.”

First generation Dragon Demons appeared from various locations around the world, and their bloodline was propagated.

“As time passed, humans flourished.”

Civilizations advanced, and a societal system that was benefit to the many was established. The number of humans continued to grow. The Dragon Demons and Dragon Majins continued to grow in number, but the speed couldn't be compared to the humans.

“However, 1st generation Dragon Demons rarely came into existence. ...mmm. I can see by your expression that you are curious as to why I went into this long story.”

“Frankly, you are right. I am enjoying the true history lesson, but.....”

Why did he need to know about all of this?

Azell wasn't a seeker of truths. Laura and Kairen were magicians, so their eyes were twinkling. However, Azell just wanted the Dragon to get to the point.

“Anyways, I needed to tell you this story to get to what I want to tell you. In conclusion, the speed at which the 1st generation Dragon Demons are forming is increasing in speed.”

“Mmm? What do you mean by that?”

“Azell, two new 1st generation Dragon Demons were born after you visited this place. Moreover, two 1st generation Dragon Demons came for a visit to my lands. One of them died in a territorial dispute with a Dragon.”

“You are saying at least four 1st generation Dragon Demons were born in the past 220 years. Moreover, you are predicting more to be born in the future.”

“That's right.”

“What does it signify?”

“It means the instances where our reality overlapping with hell is increasing in frequency.”

“Mmm.....”

Azell furrowed her brows. Albatan spoke as if it was a very serious problem, but it didn't tug at Azell's heart.

Albatan spoke.

“You reacted as I had expected. This is why I said this problem is beyond the bounds of human civilization. It seems the magicians of your party already understand what I'm getting at.”

At his words, Azell turned around to look at Laura and Yuren.

Both of them had serious expressions on their faces.

Azell queried them.

“What’s wrong?”

“Azell, if what the elder said is true.....”

Yuren’s face crumpled as he spoke.

“...the cause is unknown, but it seems the ‘hell’ where the Demons lives is encroaching into our reality?”

“I guess that is the reason why more Dragon Demons are being born. So what’s wrong with that?”

“It is a huge problem. If our current reality is invaded by hell, our world might come to an end.”

“No, what I want to say is.....”

Azell furrowed his brows.

“Is this something we should be worried about right now?”

“Mmm?”

“From a macro view, I understand this problem is something all of humanity should know about, and we have to research it. However, this is the same as asking someone that is full about what they are going to do, while there are people starving out there. That is why it doesn’t really tug at my interests.”

“You are right, but....”

Yuren was hard-press to find words. Azell was absolutely correct. The truth revealed by Albatan portended a danger that would bring the end to this world someday in the future. However, it had nothing to do with their fight against the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

Azell let out a sigh.

“I don’t know why you revealed the truth about this future event and the Demon race to me. If you delivered such information with

the intent of asking me to stop the destruction of the world.... I'm only good at cutting down enemies that are in front of me. You shouldn't tell me such news in secret. You should tell the whole world, so they could come up with a solution."

"At the very least, you acknowledge that it is a problem that has to be solved."

Azell answered Albatan's observation.

"Of course. However, it isn't something that I can solve on demand. If someone with the knowledge of this problem works on solving it and asks for my help, I will lend a hand. However, I can only do this after I end the fight that is right in front of me."

"Maybe, this person arranged you to hear this truth with the intent of getting your help."

"This person wanted me to become cognizant of this problem, and when I eventually came here asking for your help, he told you to not to turn me away? Is that what you are implying?"

"Maybe."

"This person arranged such an overly complex plan to deliver such a story to me..... I want to give him a piece of my mind for using such an inefficient method. Anyways, I've received the information he wanted me to know. I'll think about helping him when he asks me for help in person."

"Maybe, he is already close to you."

"What do you mean by that?"

"It is what it is."

"....."

Azell glared at Albatan when the Dragon spoke his words in a meaningful manner.

Albatan let out a sly laughter.

In the end, Azell let out a sigh.

“Do you have any other story I have to hear?”

“I do.”

“What is it?”

“Carlos taught me a technique, and as an exchange, he asked me for a boon.”

“It seems the part I’ve been waiting for is finally here. What is it?”

“It is the Dragon Soul.”

At his words, Azell’s eyes widened.

Albatan spoke.

“Carlos’ gift to you is the transfer of the technique that was developed in this land..”

7

The party descended the mountain as they left behind Yuren and Laura with Albatan.

When they entered the town, they saw Saibein teaching the children. After a while, Saibein excused himself from the children, and he approached the party.

“Did the conversation go well?”

“It was all right. What are you doing?”

“I’m teaching the children about magic.”

“There probably are a a lot of magicians here that can do this task instead of you.”

“That is true. However, everyone left their children with me. They wanted me to teach them the basics of magic. I never expected myself to have aptitude for teaching, and it is an enjoyable experience in some ways.”

Saibein smiled. Azell spoke.

“I see. However....”

“Why don’t we walk for a bit?”

“Mmm. Let’s do that.”

Azell nodded his head as exchanged significant looks with Kairen and Leticia.

He had a lot he wanted to talk about with Saibein. He didn’t want to know the reasons behind Saibein’s departure from the Plain of Darkness. He didn’t want answers to such questions..... He just wanted to have a conversation with Saibein.

‘I never expected a day would arrive where I would feel glad to talk to the Simpleton Prince....’

From Azell’s perspective, Saibein had been a hateful enemy. He left the Plain of Darkness, but he had stolen the knowledge that was important to humanity prior to leaving the place. He had a hand in spreading the calamity called the Great Darkness... Moreover, he was partially responsible for the slaughter that occurred within the county of Karzark.

When he thought about Saibein’s transgressions, it wouldn’t be enough to rip him from limb to limb. However, the nostalgia and happiness at meeting someone from his era overshadowed his hostile feelings. This fact baffled him.

Saibein asked him a question.

“Do you mind if I ask what you talked about with Albatan-nim?”

“The world may come to an end in the distant future, so he wanted me to find a solution. However, I’m busy dealing with what is in front of my eyes, so I asked him to find someone that is capable of looking at the long term view.”

“You must have shared an interesting conversation with him.”

“Also, I’m going to learn the Dragon Soul before I leave.”

“Dragon Soul?”

Saibein asked in surprise.

“Were you accepted as a resident of the forest?”

“No.”

“So why would he teach you the Dragon Soul?”

“I was told that it is a technique that isn’t allowed to be leaked outside of the forest.”

Albatan had given Azell a brief description about the Dragon Soul.

The Dragon Soul was born about 100 years ago. A resident of the forest had come up with it. Several thousand years had passed since the birth of the Dragon weapons, and a new way to use the Dragon Demon magic was discovered.

The Dragon Soul could be learned only by those possessing powerful Dragon Demon magic. It was same prerequisite as the Dragon weapons. Moreover, a Dragon Soul and a Dragon weapon could not coexist. This was why it was impossible for those possessing Dragon weapons to cultivate the Dragon Soul.

‘The fact that the duke and Leticia doesn’t have a Dragon weapon became good fortune for them.’

Azell had received his original Dragon weapons from the Keepers of Prophecy, and he had planned on giving one to Kairen and Leticia. However, he had acquired the technique called the Dragon Soul, so he didn’t have to needlessly decrease his battle capabilities.

“Of course, he put a condition on it. I can pass it to a limited number of people.”

Initially, Albatan put a condition that Azell wouldn’t spread the technique beyond his party members.

However, Azell tried to negotiate with the Dragon.

Laura and he already possessed Dragon weapons. Moreover, Yuren was weak in terms of Dragon Demon magic. The only ones that could learn the Dragon Soul in his party was Kairen and Leticia.

He didn't know what Carlos had given up to receive this boon, but there was no way it was worth two people being able to learn the Dragon Soul. He wanted to increase the number of people he could teach the Dragon Soul to.

The negotiation was successful. After Azell left the forest, he received the right to teach the Dragon Soul to a maximum of five people.

"I wonder what was exchanged. It must have been worth it if Albatan-nim agreed to such a preposterous demand."

Dragon Demon king worshippers weakened the power of humans by erasing important knowledge. However, they couldn't carry out such activities within the Albatan forest. This was why the forgotten knowledge regarding the Dragon Slayer's ritual, Dragon weapons and other techniques remained intact here.

However, Albatan had forbidden such knowledge from being leaked outside. The residents of the forest needed power to stop the humans from encroaching into the Albatan forest. This was why it was decreed that the Dragon Soul, which was developed in the forest, would never be spread beyond forest.

Azell spoke.

"That's right. He wanted me to learn the Dragon Soul from the creator of the Dragon Soul technique. Could you guide me to her?"

"Creator of the Dragon Soul?"

Saibein's expression turned peculiar.

Chapter 168 - The Wise Dragon (5)

“The creator of the Dragon Soul?”

Saibein’s expression turned peculiar. Azell was puzzled, so he asked a question.

“Is it someone I know?”

“I believe so. If Albatan-nim hasn’t informed you of it.... He probably wants you to meet the person yourself. He probably wouldn’t want me to tell you the identity of this person.”

“From my perspective, it is annoying, but since I’m in Albatan’s care, I’ll have to be patient. I’ll overlook it.”

Azell clicked his tongue.

Saibein had burst out laughing at the sight. He asked Azell a question.

“So could you tell me about my daughter?”

At his words, Azell became silent for a moment. Instead of answering the question, he asked a question of his own.

“Why didn’t you meet your daughter when you gave her the Dragon weapon?”

“I was keeping a promise.”

“Promise?”

Saibein let out a bitter laugh.

“When I came here, I was at death’s door from the wounds I received from the Guardian Shadows. As a condition for taking me in, Albatan-nim required me to sever all connection with the outside world.”

The reason was simple.

The relationship between the Albatan forest and the Plain of Darkness was poor. When Atein was alive, there had been a mutual

respect between the two sides. After the Dragon Demon war, the Plain of Darkness had invaded the Albatan forest several times. This was why their relationship was frayed now.

If one considered the context of the situation, Albatan had shown great generosity when he accepted one of the key figures in the Plain of Darkness into the forest.

“Even the act of delivering the Book of Darkness was controversial within the forest. However, Albatan-nim allowed me to do it.....”

Suddenly, he remembered a story he heard from the Count Beorein Michael. He asked the question.

“Around 20 years ago.... It was said that a powerful Dragon Demon fought against the Guardian Shadows within the Rulain Kingdom. Was that you?”

“Did you hear it from the Guardian Shadows? If so, you are correct.”

“I see.”

“It all started from there. The Guardian Shadows relentlessly tracked me down, and in the end, I arrived here.”

“Why did you do it?”

“What do you mean?”

“Why didn’t you escape using the help of the Dragon Demon King worshippers? Why did you come here?”

“.....”

Saibein shut his mouth. The pursuit of the Guardian Shadows was so dogged that he wasn’t able to escape. However, he didn’t say this, because he did have another reason for coming here.

Soon, he let out a sigh as he spoke.

“Before I tell you that story, I would like to hear about my

daughter.”

“Niberis is alive and well. She is making good use of the Book of Darkness you gave her. Currently, she is one of the vanguards put forth by the Plain of Darkness. She is in the forefront amongst the younger generation. She used to be in a rivalrous relationship with my comrade, Laura.”

“I see.....”

“Aside from that.... You won’t be happy hearing the rest of my story.”

“I would like you to tell me. There is no reason why you should try to spare my feelings.”

Since he spoke those words, Azell didn’t really need to spare his feelings. Azell felt trepidation as he told the truth.

“All right. I almost died at the hands of your daughter. She almost killed my comrade..... Moreover, I almost killed her too. You should thank Laura next time you see her.

“What do you mean by that?”

“Your daughter’s life was in my hands. However, Laura betrayed them, and as a price for your daughter’s life.... To be precise, everyone present with her was spared, but Laura had to betray them and give up the Vitan’s Chalice to me as a price. If I didn’t accept her offer, your daughter would already be dead.”

If he hadn’t, he would have never become comrades with Laura. Azell was sure now that he had made the right decision at the time.

Saibein had a complex expression on his face.

“I see.....”

“Moreover, I killed the man assisting your daughter. His name was Duran.”

Saibein looked at Azell with a surprised expression on his face. Azell spoke.

“He lamented the fact that he couldn't protect Niberis. He died as he apologized to you. It seemed he was indebted to you.”

“Duran..... So that is how he died.....”

Saibein raised his hands to cover his face. His voice held a deep sadness.

One could clearly see that there was a deep connection between Saibein and Duran. From Duran's perspective, Saibein had been his savior, who had led him down the correct path in life. Saibein also didn't treat their relationship lightly.

Azell just watched as Saibein silently grieved.

Azell asked him a question.

“Do you resent me?”

“...I would be lying if I said I didn't.”

Saibein looked at Azell with sad eyes.

“There are people, who had given themselves up to despair, yet they decided to put their trust in me. I don't have the right to blame you for anything that happened since I left them.”

“Why did you do it?”

Azell asked once again. Saibein let out a bitter laugh.

“As I've said, everyone had given themselves up to despair. For me, my wife's death was the final straw..... Even before I reached that point, I shuddered when I saw my surrounding, which was slowly descending into madness.”

His eyes headed towards the lake. However, he wasn't looking at the calm surface of the lake. He was looking further into the distance.

“When you killed my father, we suffered an irreparable damage.”

From the perspective of humanity, the Dragon Demon king's army was the biggest calamity to happen in their history.

However, if one looked carefully through the world's history, one could find organizations, who had similar aspirations as the Dragon Demon king's army. If one only focused on their actions, the Demon King's army were like any other army under a king. They just had very high aspirations.

A conquering force would usually place the conquered people into a lower class. So why was their actions considered to be out of the ordinary?

It wasn't. Whether it was in small scale or large scale, these incidents were common throughout human history.

The only difference was the fact that the conqueror wasn't human. The center figure of the Dragon Demon king's army was a Dragon Demon. This particular conquering force had shown overwhelming force and power compared to any other conquering forces from the past. This was why the humans had pushed backed fiercely. Their resistance was unprecedented.

Basically, if the fact that a Dragon Demon was leading the army was taken out of the equation, the Dragon Demon king's army was like any other armies from human nations.

However, the Plain of Darkness thought differently.

"The poison of madness started to seep into the irreparable wound.... At some point, we reached a point where we couldn't turn back.."

After losing in the Dragon Demon war, they deified Atein, and they clung to the belief that Atein would revive from death. The members of their organization started to turn into religious zealots.

"The remnant of our defeated army were elite warriors of our kingdom. However.... They degenerated into being a dark religious group."

They started conducting all kinds of evil acts in the name of

Atein. They did it to get ready for the revival of their savior, Atein. Their original creed had been to unite the continent to create a utopian world. Atein's original intent was shattered into pieces. It was nowhere to be seen.

If the upper levels of the organization controlled themselves, it might have been a different story. However, the madness affected the upper levels of the organization the most. As Aincera's sense of self was sucked into the Great Darkness, the atmosphere worsened.

Azell asked the question.

"Didn't you think about stopping that?"

"I tried. However, I didn't have the ability to bring about that change."

He was the last remaining child of the Dragon Demon king.

However, he had only been a symbol. In reality, he didn't have any true power.

"I was just put up as a front, so that the others could make use of me. I became painfully aware of my shortcomings. I didn't have any political influence."

He was a figurehead and proof that the Dragon Demon king's line continued.

He had tried to reach a position where he would be able to correct the wrong he saw. He went around the world, and he willingly did dangerous and vile acts. He gathered comrades in the process as he built up the organization.

However, the popularity he gained only earned him a spot on the bottom of the power structure. It was twisted. As he worked harder, he was getting farther and farther away from power. The casualties of the Dragon Demon war....no, these beings that were a husk of their prior selves refused to go out into the front line. They sent out the youngbloods to fight for them, and the weight of the madness over the organization deepened.

If Aincera was behind him, the situation might have been different. However, Aincera kept losing her sense of self, so she slowly became disinterested in the culture within the organization. She didn't care about the discord between the various factions.

"I was tired. I've been tired for over a 100 years. It didn't take that long for us to lose our minds. The truth was that we became crazier as each day passed. Our past couldn't highlight the fact that we've gone mad."

Even if he fought to save someone, it was useless. The elders were gripped by the ghost of past glories, and anyone he saved would have been sacrificed by them.

He had been in a dilemma where the fundamental problem worsened as he solved the problems in front of him.

There was no end to the dilemma, and it wounded Saibein. There were two incident that drove him to give up on everything.

"That is....."

He was about to tell Azell the reasons when he shut his mouth. He had seen Minerel approaching them. She put on a charming smile as she spoke.

"Instructor Saibein. I'm sorry for intruding in on your conversation.... A message was sent to our guest here."

"A message?"

"The creator of the Dragon Soul is waiting for him in his abode. He wants our guest to visit him there. He likes to wander around, so if we don't hurry, he might leave on a whim."

"He seems to be an unpredictable person. All right."

After he spoke those words, Azell turned to look at Saibein.

"I'll hear the rest from you later."

"Let's do that. I still have some stories I would like to hear from you...."

“All right.”

Azell left behind Saibein. He followed Minerel towards the creator of the Dragon Soul.

Saibein mumbled to himself as he watched Azell's back move away into the distance.

“The thing that makes me despair the most..... When my father realized that we failed to bring about our ideal world and everyone was falling into despair, he might have put his trust in you.”

8

They were deep within the forest. The territory ruled by Albatan was vast.

There weren't too many living within the forest, so there were gaps where no faction ruled over the land. Still, the residents of the forest didn't dare to cause too much trouble. Albatan was like holy king to them, and the land he ruled was like their holy land.

The creator of the Dragon Soul lived at the edge. He lived at the the peak overlooking the eastern shore.

Minerel spoke.

“This isn't really a great place to live, so he only resides here when he had a student.”

“There is a fine town over there, yet he chooses to live in such a place. He must be unsociable.”

“He isn't like that.”

Minerel shook her head from side to side.

“He is friendly and informal. Like the other 1st generation Dragon Demons, there was a time he was unapproachable, because of the tumultuous atmosphere around him. But now.....”

“Are 1st generation Dragon Demons normally have a violent personality?”

Azell was curious, so he asked the question.

He didn't hold 1st generation Dragon Demons in high regards, but the ones he met had disparate personalities. Reygus was an idiot. His idiocy knew no bounds. Atein was unreadable. Then there was Reshoo. He had the qualities of an innocent beast.

Minerel answered him.

"I haven't met too many 1st generation Dragon Demons. However, from what I've heard from my elders, they receive the nature of Dragons quite strongly in the beginning. That is why they are like wild beasts, and many die early from fighting everyone."

"Hmmm....."

Azell hadn't known this.

Minerel continued to speak.

"At the very least, he doesn't have that disposition, so you don't have to be worried. He is quite popular with kids. Of course, he is monstrously strict as a teacher...."

"Did you learn from him?"

"I did. Many have tried to learn the Dragon Soul, yet very few have been able to manifest it."

"Was it the same for your husband?"

"No, he was my first pupil."

"....."

"It's a love developed between a teacher and a pupil. Isn't it a bit romantic? When I first met him....."

As if she had been waiting for this opportunity, she enthusiastically told Azell about her love life with Havan. She was talking about her own love life. Of course, it gave goosebumps to anyone who heard it. It was an unsightly story for others.

However, as he listened to her story, he realized something. Outsiders called this place the demonic lands, but it was still a place where people lived. He made himself somewhat agreeable as he heard her story, and he asked her a question.

“Is marriage here the same as the humans?”

“Why wouldn’t it be? Ah. The only difference is that the divorce rate is higher here. Sir Saibein also remarked on this fact.”

In the Albatan forest, Dragon Demons and Dragon Majins married humans. It wasn’t seen as something out of the ordinary. Since each races had different life spans, it was common to see couples that had an age difference of hundred years.

In dating and marriage, people unhesitatingly broke off relations without regret. Of course, outsiders would consider such a culture to be strange.

What would have if a being that could live for over 300 years married someone that can only live for less than 100 years? The probability of them staying together was very low.

Maybe that was the cause? They became married, but the ritual didn’t require them to stay together until death.

Also, the start to their marriage differed from outside.

“There are cases where this isn’t true, but we get married when a child is conceived.”

“So you have a child?”

“My son was in the crowd of children you saw earlier..”

Minerel let out a playful laugh. Azell had a thought as he looked at her face.

‘There is no way she looks like a mother.....’

It might be, because she was a Dragon Demon. Or maybe it was the unique atmosphere of this place. She wasn’t giving off the energy of a mother with a child.

Anyways, it seemed marriage here was a promise that they would take care of the child as parents. When the child safely comes of age, they had the choice of keeping the marriage or they could divorce. The choice was up to the individuals.

As outsiders, their culture seemed very foreign. However, Azell's party accepted their way of life quite easily.

Azell had lived through everything life could throw at him during the Dragon Demon war. Leticia lived at the fringes of society, so regular societal bonds didn't hold much water with her. Kairen also traveled throughout the continent, so he had experienced numerous cultures.

The party shared their stories, and they were able to reach their destination before the sun set.

"I can hear the sound of ocean."

The metallic flavor of the ocean was being carried by the wind. One could also hear the faint sound of waves.

Their destination was a large cliff that had been carved by the ocean. When they ascended to the top, they caught sight of a hut made out of wood. Then....

"Thank you for coming all this way."

A Dragon Demon male greeted them.

"It has been awhile, master."

Minerel gave a respectful greeting, but Azell couldn't follow suit.

The Dragon Demon looked like he was in his mid-20s. His eyes and Dragon Demon Stone was green. On top of his ears, there was a grayish-white horn that looked similar to the horns of a mountain goat. His face was kind, and there was no tension on his face. He also wore loose clothing with no weapon in sight.

Then there was the most eye catching characteristic.

He had bluish-white hair color. It was a color that could never

develop within humans.

Azell knew of only one being that possessed this hair color.

“When I observed Albatan’s attitude, I thought this might be a possibility..... It really is you, Reshoo.”

He was Azell’s fourth teacher. He was the 1st generation Dragon Demon Reshoo.

The disheveled blue haired Dragon Demon named Reshoo let out a gentle laugh. He was markedly different from what Azell remembered.

“It has been a while, Azell.”

Chapter 169 - Advent of Confusion (1)

1

The situation within the continent was quickly deteriorating to the worst it has ever been.

In the end, the Bijes kingdom and the Iellos kingdom had gone to war. The two armies clashed at the borders, and the Iellos kingdom achieved victory in the battle. Afterwards, they marched straight towards the capital of the Bijes kingdom. The army of the Bijes kingdom counterattacked, and the fight between the two kingdoms continued to this day. The war intensified.

Then there was the war between the Yudusk kingdom and the Garan kingdom. It was seesawing back and forth. While the casualties at the border increased, chaos erupted inside the Yudusk kingdom as the slave revolted.

After the Dailan kingdom's king was poisoned, the first prince wanted to settle the succession in an amicable manner. However, the next two people in line of succession was assassinated. The first prince became enraged as he blamed the death on the nobles, who opposed him. In the end, a civil war erupted.

Then there was an outbreak of war between the Rulain kingdom, and the Rarus kingdom.

Also..... Dragon Demon princess Arrieta was fighting against the 2nd Grand Alliance that had appeared at the western border of the Rulain kingdom. It had been a fortnight, yet the fight hadn't ended yet.

The sound of battle was ongoing as Arrieta opened her eyes.

The noise wasn't the reason why she awoke from her sleep. The sound of battle had been ongoing since yesterday night.

She had fought from the front as she defended the castle wall. However, she needed rest, so she had changed shifts with the

soldiers to get a brief amount of sleep.

She was taking a break when the battle was ongoing. It sounded crazy, but the this was a protracted battle. It was something she had to be prepared to do as a warrior.

She used a Dragon Arts technique to force herself into a deep sleep. No one had come to wake her up, yet the reason why she had woken up was simple.

Ka-ahhhhhhhhhh.....!

The sound of a Dragon's cry could be heard.

When she realized this fact, Arrieta mumbled to herself. It almost sounded like a groan.

"They mobilized a Dragon again.... Why is there so many Dragons inside this forest?"

This was already the third Dragon that had been mobilized against them by their enemies within the Balan Forest.

The Earth Dragon had died after it entered into the Dragon Slayer's Ritual with the Azell.

The Water Dragon had appeared before the 2nd Grand Dark Alliance had made their appearance. It died while attacking the fortress.

At present, another Dragon had appeared again in front of them.

Arrieta quickly went outside. Giles, who had been sleeping in the next room, came out of his room. He followed behind her.

Giles spoke.

"Faikan was killed, yet their spirit remained unbroken.... Was it because they had kept this Dragon hidden as a secret weapon?"

"Maybe."

The 2nd Grand Alliance had been formed around a central figure. It was a mutant orc named Faikan, and Arrieta had killed it.

However, their enemies had another pivotal figure. Gakan was another mutant orc, and it had worked under Faikan as its lieutenant.

Koo-gwa-gwa-gwahng.....!

Before the two of them could reach the castle wall, the Dragon's attack broke down part of the wall.

The castle wall had already been in rough shape from the battle with the Water Dragon. They had to fight the 2nd Grand Alliance without being able to repair the walls, so it didn't stand a chance when another Dragon made its appearance.

Arrieta climbed atop the rubble.

Hoooooooooooooooo.....!

It was hard to even breathe within this powerful gale. An enormous Dragon stood within the heart of the gale.

The Dragon possessed dark green scales, and its terrifying eyes looked over the castle wall. She had never seen this type of Dragon, yet Arrieta instantly knew what it was.

'Storm Dragon.....!'

It was a Storm Dragon. It was able to freely control the power of wind.

It was a more difficult opponent than the Water Dragon that had appeared before at the Western border fortress. The Water Dragon could use its fullest power when it was raining, or there had to be a body of water nearby. The Storm Dragon wasn't limited by such requirements.

The Western Border guard was using broken down structures to stop the advance of the Storm Dragon. They shot the ballistas installed on top of the castle walls, and soldiers fired catapults from the inner castle. Magicians kept shooting their spells. The knights either threw spears, or they tried to use chain hooks to tie

down the Dragon.

Arrieta asked a question.

“What about Seigar?”

“He is facing the enemy’s detached force.”

Since they sent out the Dragon, their enemies could not directly attack the castle wall. There was no way a Dragon would be able to differentiate between allies and enemies in its attack. However, it seemed they weren’t willing to bank everything on the Dragon. The mutant orc Gakan took a small detached force through harsh terrains, and they were coming at the castle wall in a roundabout way.

It was the worst case scenario.

Arrieta closed her eyes for a brief moment as she thought over the problem. Soon, she made her decision.

“Sir Giles.”

“Yes.”

“Go help my brother.”

“What?”

“I want you to take all the soldiers here, and I want you to lead them towards the detached force. We won’t need our soldiers here.”

“What do you mean by that?”

Arrieta didn’t explain herself. She let out a deep breathe before she spoke.

“Oh, Dragon that rules over the winds...”

Her voice was amplified using her magical energy. Her words cut through the winds to reach the ears of the Dragon.

“I’m am the Dragon Majin princess of the the Rulain Kingdom. I am Arrieta.”

At this point, Giles realized Arrieta's intention. He desperately tried to stop Arrieta with his words.

"Princess! You can't!"

"I request the Dragon Slayer's Ritual."

However, Giles was a beat too late. Arrieta had made an irrevocable decision.

The swirling gale died down as silence descended. Everyone, who had been desperately attacking the Storm Dragon, stopped their attacks in confusion.

After a brief moment, the Dragon broke the silence as it nodded its head. The Dragon Slayer's Ritual was approved.

Arrieta spoke.

"Everyone listen to me! I want you all to stop attacking the Dragon, and draw back! I repeat! Stop all attacks on the Dragon and draw back! If you attack the Dragon from this point forward, it would bring a bigger calamity down on us!"

After speaking those words, Arrieta spoke towards the Storm Dragon.

"Many do not know the meaning behind this ritual. I request we move this battle to a far away location. Will you agree to it?"

She spoke those words to the Dragon. She couldn't believe she was trying to talk to a Dragon, but at the same time, she was sure her intent would be delivered to it.

Soon, the Storm Dragon nodded its head. Giles spoke to her as Arrieta got ready to follow the retreating form of the Dragon.

"Princess!"

"Do as I say, sir Giles."

"Princess... You are an idiot."

"You presume much, but I can't deny your words. Maybe, I was

influenced too much by a certain person.”

“.....”

Arrieta remembered the moment when Azell initiated the Dragon Slayer's Ritual with the Earth Dragon. He had done it to save her life. As she was tutored under him, she knew she would have to go through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual someday, but.... She never expected it to be now.

“I wonder if he felt the same as I feel right now. Please pray for me.”

Arrieta let out a dazzling smile as she jumped into the air. Her white hair swirled in the air as she moved away into the distance. Giles watched her with a devastated expression on his face..

Then... From afar, the sound of the Dragon's Roar rang out.

2

Leticia would never forget her first meeting with him.

She had been branded as a failure by the Almarick tribe, so she had been sent to the black magic research facility to be used as a test subject. Each day was like hell for her. She didn't know if it was a god's miracle or a devil's curse, but she was lucky enough to escape from that hell....

However, her escape hadn't been smooth at all.

The Plain of Darkness wouldn't let her go easily. Persistent trackers were sent after her, and she had to continuously fight against an endless number of pursuers.

She used her mighty strength to defeat her enemies, but she steadily became wounded and tired. In the end, she reached her limit, and she collapsed in front of her pursuers.

Shwaaaaaaaaah.....

Rain had been falling on that day.

Her pursuers had lost half their party thanks to Leticia. They grinded their teeth from the hatred they felt for her, but they couldn't kill her on the spot.

“Shit. Do we really have to take her back alive?”

“She is a precious test subject, so we have to keep her alive. I’ve gagged her, but she might try other methods in an attempt to kill herself. Be wary.”

“In the end, she’ll be wishing for her death, so let go of your anger.”

Leticia had been bounded and gagged. She despaired as she listened to their conversation.

“I cam up here thinking there was a landslide..... What the hell are you doing?”

It had been Jisel. He was a Dragon Demon youth with disheveled black hair, who would become her teacher in the future.

He had been residing in a nearby town, and he had heard the thunder-like sound that was created when a part of the mountain was destroyed. He had thought a landslide had occurred, so he came up here to make sure the landslide wouldn’t do any harm to the town. Instead, he had found them.

“Are you a Dragon Demon? This is a problem. If you back off, we won’t raise our hands against you.”

They were Dragon Demon worshippers. They weren’t tolerant of Dragon Demons, who weren’t within their organization. However, they had given his Dragon Demon an out. This meant they knew this Dragon Demon was a formidable opponent.

The Dragon Demon youth kicked away the offer.

“Somehow, I don’t think I’ll be able to overlook this situation.”

“Your idle curiosity will result in your life ending prematurely. I’ll warn you once again. This isn’t any of your business. If you

back off, we won't raise our hands against you."

"Now that you put it that way..... I really don't want to back off."

The youth was not show any signs of fear. He let out a bright smile. The elite soldiers of the Plain of Darkness had no choice, but to attack him.....

"You guys are dangerous. It seems you are from the Plain of Darkness..... Why do all of you think it is ok to kill people to keep secrets?"

He slaughtered them before 5 minutes was up.

Leticia had seen it with her own two eyes, yet she was having a hard time believing what had just occurred.

'He's strong.'

This batch of pursuers weren't just minor members. These were elite members dispatched from the Plain of Darkness. However, they all perished without being able to ham a single hair on this youth's body.

"Are you ok? I don't know why they were pursuing you. However, since I know who they are, I'm sure they were up to no good. You probably were not at fault. Let's go to my dwelling for now.."

"You are...."

"Ah, I forgot to introduce myself. My name is Jisel. What is your name, miss?"

"...Leticia."

This was the first meeting between Jisel and Leticia.

Jisel took Leticia to his dwelling, and he treated her. She didn't know what he did, but after that day, no one was able to track her down. In hindsight, he probably manipulated her tracks to send her pursuers on a wild goose chase.

It took a long time for Leticia to open her heart to him.

Her life had been messed up from the start. She had been born to be used as a exceptional tool, yet she had been branded as a defective product. She became a test subject that experienced living hell. It would have been stranger if she had a normal personality.

Jisel was the first person to treat her as a person.

He treated her as a person, and he taught her everything about how to live as an individual. As she lived with him, Leticia was able to laugh at others, and at times, she was able tell terrible jokes. .

“You graduate today, Leticia. You’ll be fine on your own.”

After two years, Jisel allowed her to stand on her own two feet.

It wasn’t something that was abruptly sprung on her. Jisel had made it clear in the beginning that he wouldn’t stay in this place for long. He always told her that there would come a day when he would have to leave. He had lived here for two years, because of Leticia.

Leticia thought Jisel was coldhearted for leaving her behind, but she bid him farewell without making much of a fuss.

She didn’t make a fuss not because she didn’t love Jisel. As she lived with him, she had found herself. However, at the same time, her rage and hatred continued to burn in the corner of her heart. She couldn’t forget it.

She wanted to fight the Dragon Demon king worshippers throughout her life. She knew it wasn’t the right way to live life, but she couldn’t give up on the emotions that was etched into her soul.

“I don’t have proof that this will happen, but.....”

Jisel let out a bashful smile as he spoke.

“I have hunch that I will meet you once again in this life,

Leticia.”

...after seven years had passed, his hunch was proven to be true. It was realized in an unexpected fashion.

Chapter 170 - Advent of Confusion (2)

3

“Jisel.....”

Leticia was struck dumb as she looked at the Dragon Demon in front of her.

She was aware that he had the face of her teacher. She knew it was him. At the same time, it felt as if she didn't know this person at all. The reason being.....

“...why did you dye your hair into such a strange color?”

Her teacher hadn't possessed bright blue hair color before. He would have been at the center of attention wherever he went if he had possessed such hair color.

Aside from that, he hadn't changed much from what she remembered from her memories. He had already reached adulthood, so his appearance hadn't changed or aged. It hadn't been long enough for such changes to take place.

Jiesel smirked.

“You are still the same, Leticia. I didn't dye my hair. This is my original hair color. My hair was dyed when it was black.”

Azell queried in surprise when he heard their conversation.

“So Leticia's teacher Jisel was you, Reshoo?”

“That is correct.”

“I thought it might be a possibility, but.... I was told you had different hair color, and your reservoir of Dragon Demon magic was small. That is why I abandoned such thoughts.”

“My hair color draws too much attention outside. That is why I dyed it black. Also, it isn't too hard to hide one's Dragon Demon magic.”

“...it isn’t too hard? We aren’t talking about someone else, right? We are talking about you.”

Azell put on an expression as if he had heard something really strange. Jisel...no, Reshoo laughed.

“It has been over 220 years. How can I be the same as before?”

“You did change a lot. First, you did age a lot.”

“Isn’t it normal to say you grew up a lot? I’m far from being old.”

Reshoo grumbled.

In Azell’s memories, Reshoo had looked as if he was in his mid teens. He looked to be in in his mid-20s right now.

‘At the time, he was like a rude brat, who didn’t know that the world was really dangerous....’

Of course, in the past, Reshoo was considered to be someone that possessed great power. However, that had only been true in outward appearance.

The current Reshoo had not only grown up, but his demeanor had changed a lot. His sharp eyes had softened. There was an air of calmness, and he looked comfortable in his own skin. His Dragon Demon magic used to have a murderous and violent intent. There was a calmness to his energy now. He now understood why Leticia was unable to recognize how monstrous his Dragon Demon magic was.

‘You’ve become scary, Reshoo.’

That point made him shiver.

Reshoo was formed from a unification between a Dragon and a Demon. He possessed no parents, and he had been on top of the food chain as soon as he walked on the surface of this world. Didn’t his current demeanor mean that Reshoo had obtained techniques that allowed him to use his power in a rational manner?

He even developed the Dragon Soul. There hadn’t been a

technique that opened up so many possibilities like this since the Dragon weapons were created several thousand years ago.

Maybe, Reshoo was stronger than Azell, who had recovered his Dragon weapons.

Reshoo looked intently at Azell and Leticia before he spoke.

“I knew we would see each other again, but... This is quite surprising. It’s a happy coincidence to meet you, Leticia. However, Azell’s presence does make me wonder if I’m dreaming or not.”

“Were you aware that I had fallen asleep?”

“I did. Albatan-nim knew about it too, right?”

“He did.”

“It seems we have a lot to discuss.... Before we do that, there is something we have to do.”

“What is it?”

“We have to build a house.”

“.....”

Everyone was at a loss for words. Reshoo shrugged his shoulders.

“I heard you wanted me to teach you about the Dragon Soul. It isn’t something that can be done in a day or two. It is impossible for four people to sleep in my hut.”

“The town isn’t that far away from here. Can’t we just travel back and forth?”

“It isn’t a bad idea if we are trying to strengthen your physical fitness, but... It won’t be possible. There are days where the training will put you in a state where you won’t be able to return.”

Reshoo spoke with a bright smile, but his words implied that their training would be very brutal.

“You can travel back and forth on days when you are able to. However, we should build a temporary shelter. Let’s converse as

we build the house.”

“You know how to build a house?”

“I built this hut. As I traveled around the world, I picked up on how to be a carpenter.”

“I really can’t see you as a carpenter.....”

The current Reshoo was radically different from the one Azell knew. What kind of life did he live during Azell’s hibernation?

Reshoo laughed as he spoke.

“Azell, your words made me into what I am right now.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m a bit disappointed that you don’t remember it. You told me understand what it is to be human.”

“Ah.....”

Azell finally remembered the past event.

After losing to Atein, Reshoo had been at death’s door. Reshoo asked what he had to do to become as strong as Azell. At the time, Azell told him to understand what it is to be human... Azell never expected him to remember his words after all that time.

Reshoo spoke with a soft light in his eyes.

“I followed your words. I approached and got to know various humans. In the process of understanding them... I fell in love with them. They were so small and weak that my heart ached. I couldn’t help, but love them.”

Reshoo placed a hand on his chest, and he gave himself up to his recollection. As Reshoo spoke, Azell tried to merge the memory of Reshoo he had known, and the figure named Jisel, who was described to him by Leticia.

Jisel was completely different from the Reshoo from his memories. However, what if it was as Reshoo had said? Was this

change the result of Reshoo taking his advice and approaching the humans?

“It took you a very long time to return. During that time, I lived amongst the humans. At times, I lived amongst them as a Dragon Demon. I also lived amongst them disguised as humans... I protected, nurture, loved, fought and killed humans.”

There was some contradictions in his words, but Azell knew what Reshoo was trying to convey with his words.

It was hard to love humans, yet they were easy to hate. If he was able to find values that made humans worth loving, it would have been easy for him to find reason to hate them. Humans killed other humans. As a Dragon Demon, would it have been strange for him to be able to separate the humans he loved and wanted to protect with the ones he wanted to kill?

Reshoo continued to speak.

“I’ve experience much happiness and joy. At the same time, I experience an equal amount of heartache and pain. The ones that shouldn’t be sick got sick, and the ones that shouldn’t have been killed got killed. These were all done by the hands of humans.....”

How much tragedy had he seen in the past 200 years as he wandered the world?

After the Dragon Demon war ended, the world had been overflowing with tragedies. The absolute threat called the Dragon Demon king’s army was gone, but that didn’t mean everyone could live a happily ever after.

Still, Azell was able to experience a brief period of peace. Even as he was dying from Atein’s curse, he knew he had fought for a worthy cause. His actions resulted in a lot of people finding their happiness. He was able to experience this when he ruled over the County of Karzark.

However, Reshoo had seen many darkness that Azell hadn’t been

able to witness. These darkness didn't go away, because the war was over.

Still, humans shone within this darkness.

"The Dragon Soul arose from such experiences. I hope I can repay some of what I gained from you with this."

"Recompense.... I never expected to hear such words from you."

"Do you think it would be fun to live the same way in an unchanging world? We have no idea what will happen the next day, so we have to enthusiastically live our lives."

Reshoo laughed as he spoke those words.

When he saw Reshoo's laughter, Azell perceived that a lot of time had passed. It had been awhile since he had such a feeling. Reshoo had been like simple beast, but enough time had passed for the 1st generation Dragon Demon to become a mature adult.....

4

Leticia quickly took control of her shock, and she calmed down. It didn't matter what occurred in front of her. She was used to focusing on the reality right of her eyes. She was able to do this, because she had experience pain at the bottom of hell.

"Jisel... No, would you prefer to be called Reshoo?"

"I don't care either way. I'm used to being called by various names."

"That means you used aliases aside from Jisel as you wandered the world."

"Didn't you do the same?"

"I did. If you were to choose a real name, what would it be?"

"It is Reshoo."

"Then I'll call you by Reshoo. The Jisel I remember didn't have such an eye-catching head."

“You don’t like the color of my hair? Everyone tells me it is pretty. They are jealous of my hair color.....”

“It doesn’t matter if it is pretty or unsightly.....”

Leticia furrowed her brows.

“Your hair color is radically different from what I remember. That is why I find your outer appearance to be strangely objectionable.”

“Mmm. If it is bothering you, do you want me to dye my hair black?”

“It’s all right. I’ll probably get used to it the more I see it.”

“It seems that part about you remain the same. How have you been? I never expected you to show up with Azell. I was surprised.”

“I met him while I was killing the Dragon Demon king worshippers. So.....”

Leticia spoke about what happened during the 7 years after they parted. There wasn’t much to talk about. Before she met Yuren, she had travelled to various regions around the continent to fight Dragon Demon king worshippers. Occasionally, she was mistaken as a Dragon Demon king worshippers, so she was chased by the Guardian Shadows. She healed herself in hiding when she received injuries from battle. Then there was the very brief periods of time she set aside for training.... She had lived a very dreary life.

This was why she had much more to talk about when she talked about Yuren, Azell, Kairen and Laura even though they had been comrades for only a brief amount of time. Reshoo let out a gentle smile after he heard her story.

“You’ve met some good comrades, Leticia.”

“Mmm.....”

Leticia had an awkward expression on her face.

‘Good comrades.....’

From the time she gained independence from Reshoo to the fight against the Dragon Demon King worshippers, she had been alone for a long time. Occasionally, she did fight alongside others, but she never became colleagues with anyone else.

This was why the concept of partnering with outsiders for foreigners was foreign to her. Currently, she had opened her heart, and she travelled with them. Sometimes it did feel like a dream. It was as if she was seeing herself from a distance.

Reshoo asked her a question.

“It seems you’ve gotten better. You are hurt yet you are able to keep your Dragon Demon magic calm and ordered. Did Azell teach you a lot of things?”

“It isn’t as if I hadn’t learned nothing.”

“Azell always had a knack for teaching others. He’s able to learn everything easily, yet he has a talent for breaking down theories in a logical manner.”

“You guys were each other’s teacher?”

“That’s right. Of course, if we considered the content of what we learned, I learned more from him. In truth, I wasn’t at a point in my life where I was capable of teaching someone else.”

Reshoo let out a bitter laugh. At the time when they taught each other, he had really been like a beast. He had taught Azell about the Dragon’s power, but it was hardly a proper instruction.

Leticia became surprised.

“I can’t imagine it. I’ve never seen anyone be more patient in teaching others than you.”

It didn’t matter if one’s student was good at studying or not. The most important qualities of an instructor were patience and an ability to stay calm. From what Leticia had observed, Reshoo had excelled in those departments. It didn’t matter if he was teaching

Leticia or the village children. Reshoo had never expressed any annoyance, and he had taught them with patience.

Chapter 171 - Advent of Confusion (3)

Reshoo let out an embarrassed laughter.

“I learned that from Azell too. I wasn’t a good teacher, and I wasn’t a good student either. From the moment I set foot on this world, I was strong. I could do whatever I wanted. This might be why I hated studying subjects that had anything to do with logic. Of course, I was terrible at explaining what I knew to others.”

When Reshoo thought back on the words he had spoken out loud, he had a hard time deciphering what he had been trying to say.

If a bird with wings asked a flightless being to teach one how to fly, what would the answer sound like?

He regurgitated concepts when Azell had no basis for understanding it. Of course, his explanation had sounded nonsensical. Still, Azell was like a person sifting through trash to find treasures. Azell had gathered pieces of what he had said to create meaningful words.

“I knew everything at an instinctual, but when someone else..... No, I couldn’t even explain what I knew, yet this man was coming up with precise explanations. Even I couldn’t help but marvel at it.”

“Basically, he made a brute into a person?”

“That’s right. To be precise, he made me want to become a person.”

At the time, Reshoo had been satisfied by what he was. He had been born as a powerful being, and he could easily acquire whatever he wanted.

However, at the time, he had met Azell. Azell had been born weak, yet he had exceeded those that were born into power. Azell had reached a higher state than him. Reshoo was able to realize his shortcomings, and the desire to become a better existence

appeared.

“My desire for wanting to become stronger started when I was defeated by Atein. However, I wanted to become a better person when.... It was thanks to Azell.”

Azell had taught Reshoo many things, and he left behind a present that would become guide his life.

“Understand the humans. Leticia, I met you, because I had heard those words.”

“You followed my words for the past 200 years, and you lived amongst the humans?”

“At first, that was my motive.... However, you can say it is my way of life now. It is a long time even for me, but the time passed by so quickly.”

It didn't seem like a lot of time to him, but babies born not too long ago started to crawl. Then the children grew to walk, talk, cry and laugh. They quickly grew up.

“I couldn't help, but marvel at the process. I saw it countless times, and I should have been tired of watching it. Maybe, it was because I wasn't born under the protection of parents. I didn't grow up under such an environment.”

“...no, it isn't normal for one to be self aware at birth. This is true for when one is a baby..”

“Still, one's first experience becomes stamped into one's basic instincts. Even if one can't remember it, it is imprinted somewhere in one's soul. I don't have what the humans had..... To be precise, I would also include other Dragon Demons and Dragon Majins into the same group. I wonder if that is what separates us.”

“I'm sure this is an experience unique to the 1st generation Dragon Demons.”

“Ah. I'm speaking about this as if it is common knowledge. Have

you heard about this, Azell?”

“I heard about it. Azell said you possessed the most Dragon Demon magic amongst the 1st generation Dragon Demons..... In many ways, I feel duped.”

“I wasn’t really trying to be deceptive towards you.”

“It doesn’t matter. In the past, I knew you didn’t tell me every minute detail of your past. It doesn’t matter who you are. I learned many things from you. The fact that I owe you a lot remains unchanged.”

“When you put it that way, I am thankful and embarrassed.....”

Reshoo let out an embarrassed laughter. He scratched his cheeks.

As she observed him, Leticia asked Reshoo a question..

“It seems there are infinite variety even amongst the 1st generation Dragon Demons. This was true about Reygus and Almarick, but.....”

“Ah, you did say you met those two. How was it?”

“Reygus was a completely crazy and idiotic battle fiend. Almarick was.... Mmm. He was like a mountain hermit that lived a full life, but he was horrifyingly strong. After Azell keeled over, the four of us tried to attack him. We lost without being able to do anything.”

“Mmm? Could you give me a more detailed account?”

When Reshoo wondered about it, Leticia went over what she had experienced. After hearing everything, Reshoo tilted his head in puzzlement.

“From what I heard about Almarick from Azell, he didn’t have such a personality.....”

“Azell also said that his personality had become markedly different.”

“I’m not well acquainted with them. If Azell says it is so, he’s

probably right.”

“I heard you fought with Atein, yet you aren’t acquainted with Reygus and Almarick?”

“When I fought Atein, it occurred within this forest..... At the time, he only brought Aunsaurus. When I left this forest to roam the world, the Dragon Demon war had ended. This was why I never became acquainted with them.”

“Ah, I see.”

“Atein was... He was quite the entertaining fellow.”

“Mmm?”

Leticia furrowed her brows. Reshoo continued to speak.

“His way of thinking was a bit outrageous.”

“Outrageous?”

“Normally, when one encounters a problem, one usually chooses between two choices. It is to either solve the problem or avoid the problem.”

“That’s right.”

“However, Atein wasn’t like that. After he solved the problem with his ability, it didn’t end there... He would sit in front of the problem to come up with other ways he could use to solve the problem, then he would come up with methods that could be used by others to solve the same problem.”

“The former sounds reasonable, but the latter... It does sound strange.”

“It doesn’t end there. Afterwards, he investigates the problem itself. Why did the problem arise? Is there some way that would ensure that this problem never arises.... He would methodically analyze the problem, and at each stage of the analysis, he would come up with various methods he and the others could use to stop the problem from arising. He would continuously find subjects

that he would become engrossed in.”

“Mmm.....”

It was clear that Atein was an eccentric figure.

Leticia asked a question.

“It seems 1st generation Dragon Demons are powerful. I experienced their might when we came across Reygus and Almarick. They were really strong. Was it the same for the Dragon Demon king Atein?”

“Mmmm? It is impossible to compare Atein to the two of them.”

“He was that strong?”

“No, I misspoke. I meant Atein wasn’t strong only because he was a 1st generation Dragon Demon. In truth, this might also be true of Reygus and Almarick.”

“What do you mean?”

“After the 1st generation Dragon Demons started appearing in this world, they all possessed massive amount of power. However, there are only few instances where a 1st generation Dragon Demon was able to transcend one’s lifespan like Atein and the Dragon Demon generals.”

“They transcended their lifespan? Those words... Are you saying that not all 1st generation Dragon Demons live so long?”

“Yes. Unless one gets murdered, Dragon Demons live longer than the Dragon Majins. However, not all of them are able to live as long as Atein and the Dragon Demon generals. There’s also the fact that they were the first, so there is a difference. Then there is the temperament of the Dragons..... They are similar to the Dragons before they go through the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual in that they are aggressive. This is why they die early on.”

“Still, 1st generation Dragon Demons are overwhelmingly powerful, so why would they die so easily?”

“You can’t see Reygus and Almarick as the standard. Your party can handle normal 1st generation Dragon Demons as if they are kids.”

“Is that really true?”

Leticia eyes widened. This was completely different from what she had perceived to be true.

Reshoo let out a bitter laugh.

“It is true that the 1st generation Dragon Demons are born with much more potential. There aren’t any beings in this world that are born with as much Dragon Demon magic as them. However, let’s us say a 1st generation Dragon Demon was born with twice the Dragon Demon magic you have right now, Leticia.”

“Even that much sounds amazing.....”

Leticia was a Dragon Majin, but she had been a test subject born to become the heir to Almarick. Her potential was excellent. Moreover, she experienced a unification with a Demon, so her Dragon Demon magic was better than most Dragon Majins. That is why twice the amount of her Dragon Demon magic was an incredible amount.

“However, what if the 1st generation Dragon Demon knew no Dragon Arts? How strong would he be?”

“...I see. So that is what you meant.”

Of course, it would be difficult to find an adversary in nature that would be able to rival them. They could rip apart humans with their bare hands, and their physical capabilities were so overwhelming that beasts couldn’t track their movements.

However, one had to go through a learning process to fully utilize one’s Dragon Demon magic.

Even if they didn’t have techniques that maximized their power through magic techniques or Dragon Arts, the Dragon Demons had

the natural ability to cause fire or wind to manifest. Still, one had to establish how to best use these powers through experience.

Beasts grew up to be crafty hunters, but many died in the maturation process. Even after they are fully grown, a single mistake could cause the beast's death.

The life of a 1st generation was like that.

“They are strong, but they are much weaker than a Dragon. Moreover, Dragons are protected by their parents until they mature. If we take that point into consideration, it is harder for the 1st generation Dragon Demons to survive. On top of that, 1st generation Dragon Demons rarely form groups. They work alone, and that also decreases their chances of survival.”

Even if they possessed strength and intelligence, they were like beasts trying to survive in nature. They had to live the life of an independent adult beast. This was why many died in territorial battles. They often succumbed to starvation and fatigue.

“Of course, the speed at which they improve their abilities is incredibly fast. Still, the upper limits of their natural ability is clear compared to those that learned the Dragon Arts or magic.”

“If that is true.....”

Leticia furrowed her brows.

“From what Azell had said, he said you were incredibly powerful from the very first time he met you. Were you just lucky? Or were you somehow special?”

“It is both.”

Reshoo let out a bitter laugh.

“According to Atein, I was probably born with the largest amount of power amongst the 1st generation Dragon Demons. This was why I had no natural enemies, and even before I learned techniques from Azell, I was able to win fights against Dragons for

territories.”

Basically, he had been stronger than a Dragon when he hadn't learned magic or the Dragon Arts. He really was someone that possessed a ridiculous amount of potential.

“However, it isn't as if all 1st generation Dragon Demons are powerful. You should look at the 1st generation Dragon Demons that were born in this forest. The only that is special is probably Hanerosa.”

“Hanerosa.... I've heard that name earlier.”

“He is in charge of the eastern edge of the forest. He came into being around 120 years ago. He is powerful, yet he is an introvert. This was why it was easy to rope him to our side.....”

“Somehow, it feels as if the image I held of the 1st generation Dragon Demons are being smashed into pieces.”

“It'll be destroyed further in the future. You'll have the chance to meet other 1st generation Dragon Demons in this forest.”

“I see. Let me ask you one question.”

When he nodded his head, Leticia's face hardened into a serious expression. Reshoo nodded his head.

“Speak.”

“If I learn the Dragon Soul from you, will I be able to go toe to toe with Reygus and Almarick?”

“Mmmm.....”

Reshoo furrowed his brows. Then he tilted his head.

“From your explanation, I can get a rough idea of their battle capabilities... It'll be impossible in the short term.”

“...I see.”

“I'm talking about the immediate future. It is impossible for you to go toe to toe with them in terms of strength. If all of you had the

highest ranked Dragon weapon like the Vitan's Chalice, it would still be a tall task. However, the story might change depending on what type of abilities you guys can earn through the Dragon Soul."

Chapter 172 - Advent of Confusion (4)

5

Arrieta vacantly stared up at the gloomy sky.

She had no idea how long she had been standing there like that.

She suddenly started hearing sounds, and she started to wake up from the static state she had been in.

“...Dragon Demon...can’t believe.....”

“The information... Dragon Demon princess.....”

Words that had meaning were interspersed between the sounds, and the words burrowed into her consciousness.

At the same time, her senses started to recover. It was as if a painting that had been neglected was brought out into the light. Her world had been black and white, but color was returning. Her sense of smell, sound and touch came back to life once again. Shapes around her came into focus. Arrieta smelled the thick scent of blood. It was enough to make her nose go numb. There was an enormous amount of blood around her, and her body was dyed red with it.

Moreover, she realized she was holding something in her hands. Arrieta became startled when she realized she was holding onto a corpse of a Dragon Majin with a broken neck.

‘Did I fight with the enemy?’

She moved her body in a flash.

Pah-jee-jee-jeek!

Her sword blocked the halberd that was being swung at her back. The magical energy of the weapons repulsed each other. It created a white spark.

‘Enemies.’

She didn't know what was going on, but her enemies were targeting her.

When she realized this fact, her body reacted.

“Hoohp!”

She yelled as she pushed away her enemies with surprising strength.

“Shake free and roar! Power of the Dragon!”

She spoke a cantrip infused with the power of the Dragon Arts. A storm of mental waves hit her enemies. While her enemies staggered, Arrieta assessed the identity of her enemies.

‘Dragon Demon king worshippers. There are...three more to go.’

At the same time, the memories leading up to her trance started to return.

She had gone through with the Dragon Slayer's Ritual with the Storm Dragon.

It had felt like the longest fight of her life. The fight felt like it lasted an eternity. In the end, she was able to defeat the Dragon, and she had taken the Dragon's power.

‘I see. I've won.’

Even she was having a hard time believing it, but she had won against a Dragon in a one on one battle. This was why she was overflowing with energy. She felt as if she would be able to win against another Dragon right now.

“Shit! This is completely different from our intelligence! We were told the three of us would be able to capture her.....”

The Dragon Demon king worshippers were taken aback. They had mobilized the Storm Dragon to bring down the Western Border Fortress, yet it was neutralized through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. This was why they decided to assassinate Arrieta. Their plan was to put the continent into a state of confusion, and the

Western Border Fortress had to fall for this plan to work. Arrieta had strayed far from the fortress to conduct the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. It was a golden opportunity for them to kill Arrieta.

The only problem right now was the fact that Arrieta was drastically stronger than what their intel had suggested.

The intel was considered to be relatively fresh, since they had assessed her capabilities when they tried to capture her at the Balan Forest. However, Arrieta had become incomparably more stronger after she received instruction from Azell at the Dukedom of Tarantos.

From the beginning, she possessed great potential for a Dragon Majin. Even Kairen had acknowledged her talent. Moreover, she had trained her basic foundation ad nauseam. This was why she was able succeed in the Dragon Slayer's Ritual after learning the secret techniques from Azell.

"It is hardly necessary to say this, but.... I'll have to thank Azell again."

Arrieta let out a smile. This caused the Dragon Demon king worshippers to grind their teeth.

"Koo-oohk. Is this the doing of the great sinner Azell Karzark!"

"It wasn't enough that he caused harm to the king. Now he is interfering with our great work!"

At his words, Arrieta's expression turned peculiar. She queried them.

"Azell Karzark? What are you talking about?"

"Don't play innocent with me, Dragon Demon princess! The Azell you were with confirmed that he is the Azell Karzark! It has been verified!"

"....."

For a brief moment, Arrieta looked at them in a dumbfounded

manner.

‘Are you saying Azell is the hero Azell Karzark?’

In the past, Azell had said the same thing to her. At the time, she had a hard time believing his assertion. Still, if she went over the memories she had with him, it didn’t feel implausible either.

So he really was telling the truth?

“Hahaha. This is quite humorous. I unknowingly received instructions from the legendary hero.”

Arrieta had queried Azell about this subject several times. She remembered a particular conversation she had with him.

‘These are precious techniques, yet you are teaching it to me for no cost. Are you sure about this? I’m not sure why you are doing this.’

‘It’s all right. However, I want you to promise me one thing.’

‘Ah, of course. I won’t pass on these techniques to anyone.....’

‘I want the opposite. I don’t want you to hesitate in sharing it with everyone. I want you to gather as many people under you, and you have to wake them up to the reality of this era. That is the only cost I want from you, princess.’

‘Why? Sir Azell, why are you going so far..... How can you gift everyone your techniques without any reservation?’

‘We need power to confront the darkness that will arrive once again. Our enemies put enormous effort over time to manipulate the history of humanity, and our true powers were stolen from us. Our fighting techniques should have evolved as time passed after the Dragon Demon war. However, we lost the essence of our fighting techniques. We have regressed. If those that still possess these lost techniques rise up once again, we will be faced with a bigger calamity than the Dragon Demon war.’

...at times he had spoken about the Dragon Demon war as if he

had been there.

He talked about how the warriors of this era were inferior in quality. The martial artists of this generation wasn't lacking in resolve or talent. They had been castrated in terms of techniques, and the limitation it caused was frightening.....

She had been taught by Azell as he pointed out these problems. He broke down his techniques down to the basics, so she would be able to teach it to others. He had been meticulous in his teachings.

Arrieta hadn't forgotten the promise she had made to Azell.

She didn't hesitate to teach the people under her. She didn't hold anything back. It was an era where the essence of Dragon Arts and the Spirit Order had been assaulted by the Dragon Demon King worshippers. The forces under Arrieta, Seigar and the Dukedom of Tarantos could be called the strongest force in the human realm right now.

"It would have been better if I knew this earlier. I am envious of my teacher."

As she mumbled those words, Arrieta used Instantaneous Movement to appear behind the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

"Koohk!"

The Dragon Majin magician shot a thunderbolt towards her. However, the attack was in vain. The thunderbolt passed through empty air. It had been her clone.

From the opposite side, Arrieta attacked in a fearsome manner. She clashed with the warrior wielding a halberd. She glared at him as she yelled out loud.

"Shake free and roar! Power of the Dragon!"

Her cantrip turned into a storm of mental waves. The magician, who had been trying to support the warrior, flinched immediately.

However, the two warriors gritted their teeth as they defended

their mind. They were taught battle tactics and secret techniques from the warrior training facility within the Plain of Darkness.

“Do you think that will work a second time.....”

Pah-hahk!

One of the warrior charged forward in a frontal attack. However, his eyes widened before he could finish his words.

Arrieta had been clashing with the warrior holding the halberd, but in a flash, she passed by the halberd wielding warrior to cut down the other warrior.

‘Shit. Did she mess with my senses.....!’

The storm of mental waves was a bait.

In response to the harsh storm of mental waves, the two warriors had created a stiff mental wall. However, the structure of this mental wall was simple. Arrieta used this flaw to slightly tweak their senses. The information that was transferred from their eyes to their brain was delayed by a beat. It allowed her to easily slice through their defense.

“Oh Evil Darkness, Rend Apart!”

She used Instantaneous Movement to flip the field then she brought down her sword from up high. A torrent of light came pouring out following the trajectory of her sword.

“Koo-ahhhhhhk.....!”

The scream was drowned out by the sound of the explosion.

Unfortunately, the warrior with the halberd pierced through the explosion. The magician had been killed, because his reaction had been too slow. The warrior had been able to defend against the attack.

However, Arrieta snorted when she saw this. The warrior was immediately puzzled by why Arrieta hadn’t followed up with an attack. Soon, he found out the reason why.

Zzuh-ung!

Someone else had ambushed him from behind.

It was a young knight with curly blond hair and a baby face. It was Giles Vince. When he realized the Dragon Slayer's Ritual was over, he had sought out Arrieta.

"Princess! I'm sorry for being late!"

"You could have taken a little more time to get here, and it wouldn't have mattered."

"You should just scold me instead."

Giles let out a bitter laugh as he moved in to dispatch the warrior wielding a halberd. Giles spoke.

"...you are human."

"Why does that matter?"

"I'm not obligated to tell you anything."

The halberd wielding warrior recoiled in fright. He had suddenly heard a voice emanating from right next to him. He turned his head in surprise to look at the source of the voice.

'Oh no!'

However, no one was there. Giles used this opening to get inside his guard.

A halberd had the advantage of unleashing devastating attacks with its long reach. However, the warrior had fallen for Giles' trick, and it had created an opening. Giles had closed the distance, and the halberd's advantage had been neutralized.

"Koo-oohk! You are merely an unbeliever!"

All Dragon Demon king worshippers were self-conceited.

'These unbelievers do not know the forgotten techniques. They don't stand a chance against me.'

Up until now, the Dragon Demon king worshippers had always been superior in terms of techniques compared to their opponents. The unbelievers had lost the techniques dealing with the mind and the senses, so how could they compete with him?

However, the Dragon Demon king worshipper didn't have this advantage over Giles. Giles took advantage of the warrior's weak spot, and he had neutralized the only advantage the warrior had over Giles. He had neutralized the weapon's long reach. The halberd wielding warrior was barely able to block the sword strikes that were coming at him like a storm. He glared at Giles.

The warrior's mental wave had been cultivated into being as sharp as a blade, and it impacted on Giles' mind barrier. If he could mess with Giles' senses, he believed he could turn the table.

Zzzeeeeng!

When he put on a smile of satisfaction, he was hit with a sharp headache.

“Ooh-ook.....?”

“You've already suffered under the princess' attack. Do you really think I'm an idiot that knows nothing? This isn't just self conceit. You are the idiot.”

When the warrior attacked what he assumed to be a weak point in the mental barrier, Giles sprung a trap he had prepared. When the mental wave hit the mental barrier, a counterattack immobilized the halberd wielding warrior for a brief moment.

Pah-ahk!

Giles separated the warrior's head from his body.

After defeating his enemy, Giles took a knee to pay his respects to Arrieta.

“I congratulate you for defeating the Dragon.”

“I still can't believe I was able to succeed.”

“Even after seeing it with my own eyes, I’m also having a hard time believing in it.”

At Giles’ words, Arrieta let out a bright smile. The Dragon’s corpse was lying amidst the broken trees. Its neck had been torn away, and an enormous amount of blood had poured out. The surrounding region was dyed red with blood, and half of Arrieta’s body was soaked in blood. It was a ghastly sight.

Arrieta asked him a question.

“How’s the situation at the fortress?”

“It is all wrapped up. The prince was able to kill the leader.”

“I see. The remaining enemy force might rally and attack the fortress. Let us return.”

“What are you going to do with the Dragon’s corpse?”

“We’ll have to return for now, and we’ll bring back enough manpower to take the corpse back with us. We’ve already killed the two mutant orcs and the Dragon Demon king worshippers that worked secretly behind the scene. However, that doesn’t mean there aren’t any more left. We should be on our guard.”

“Understood.”

“Also.....”

Arrieta stopped speaking for a brief moment, and she broke out in sudden uncontrollable laughter. Giles looked at her in puzzlement. She laughed as she spoke in a playful manner.

“These guys said that sir Azell is Azell Karzark.”

“What?”

“Last time, he spoke about it as if it was a joke, but it seems he was telling the truth. If I tell Enora this fact, I wonder what expression she would make.”

The situation at the fortress had been precarious, so she had

evacuated Enora to the back. Arrieta was looking forward to telling her this truth.

Suddenly, Giles spoke.

“If it’s Ms Enora.... She will probably be shocked by something else.”

“What do you mean?”

“She’ll probably faint at how you look right now, princess.”

“Mmm. Is it that bad?”

“This might sound rude, but it would be best if you washed yourself once with water.”

“I’ll do so. However, sir Giles....”

“Yes.”

“You don’t seem too surprised?”

“Isn’t it the same for princess?”

“Yes. It is surprising how easily I accepted this truth.”

“It might be the same for Ms Enora.”

“That won’t be any fun. Do you think Seigar will be surprised?”

“I believe so.”

The two shared conspiratorial laughter.

Chapter 173 - Another Enemy (1)

1

The essence of Spirit Order had everything to do with the mastery over one's mind.

It boosted the mind, and one could control one's senses according to one's will. In turn, the mind and senses were expanded using the mental waves. If one limited the comparison to the manipulation of the mind, an Archmage at the zenith of his magical power couldn't come close to a high ranking Spirit Order Practitioner.

In martial arts, one trained one's body first. Techniques were cultivated then the mind was trained.

However, Spirit Order was the opposite. The training of one's mind allowed one to gain control of one's magical energy. This was used to cultivate techniques, and the body was trained last.

The techniques used to control the mind was the essence of the Spirit Order. It was inevitable that one of the most important training method was meditation.

When one meditated, Spirit Order allowed one to observe one's inner workings as if one was reading the palm of one's hand.

One could find out the rhythm of one's heart beat, and one could observe how one's circulation changed depending on the rhythm of one's heart. Then there were the Rings of Life surrounding the heart. The Rings of Life created magical energy as it pulsed with the heart. One could observe the pattern in which magical energy was spread throughout the body.....

The pulsing of the heart created the magical energy, and the magical energy saturated one's energy pulse before it was spread outside of one's body.

At the same time, one's senses expanded.

Even as one closes one's eyes to monitor the inner working of one's body, one was able to meticulously observe one's surrounding.

Ddooohk.....!

The sound of dew falling on top of the grass could be heard.

His senses extended beyond it. It was as if his senses were following the blowing winds. Further and further.....

In the next moment, Azell opened his eyes from several hundred distance away.

Cheeee.....!

Smoke emanated from his entire body.

That wasn't the only thing that happened. From behind Azell, the sound of an explosion rang out as strong winds swirled around him. The beautiful trees were broken. The animals and birds fled in surprise.

“...what did you just do?”

Laura, who had been standing there, asked in surprised. Azell created cold air to cool his body.

“Instantaneous Movement.”

“...that really was Instantaneous Movement? You traveled around 500 meters.”

Azell had been meditating on top of a mountain. When his senses reached this location, he used Instantaneous Movement in a lightning fast manner to travel to this place.

“It was slightly less than 400 meters. This is what happens when I use my full strength. However, this isn't a practical move. If I used this in a real battle, my body would be sent flying by the rebound.”

Azell's Instantaneous Movement from a moment ago was several

times faster than the speed of sound. Moreover, he had to suffer enormous shock at the beginning and the end. This one Instantaneous Movement had tired him out.

Oooooohng.....

He had consumed an enormous amount of magical energy, yet his Energy Pulse had filled up in no time.

There were eight Rings of Life encircling Azell's heart.

They were all finished using the Dual Banding technique. It was as if his source of Dragon Demon magic was limitless. He was continuously producing highly dense Dragon Demon magic.

Laura mumbled to herself as if she couldn't believe what she was seeing.

"Even if you've inherited 9 Dragon weapons, I can't believe your magical energy became this high....."

"It isn't just the Dragon weapons."

"What?"

"Carlos hadn't just stored my Dragon weapons..... He used the Keepers of Prophecy as a source for Dragon Demon magic. An enormous amount of power was stored within the Dragon weapons. This was why a flood of power had come into me when I inherited the weapons. It was as if I had completed a Dragon Slayer's Ritual."

This resulted in Azell's wounds healing in an instant, and his body had become much stronger. It also increased the density of his Dragon Demon magic.

In the process of settling the swirling power within his body, Azell had been able to create his 8th Ring of Life. He had also completed the Dual Banding.

Laura queried.

"Didn't you say you handled 13 Dragon weapons in the Dragon

Demon war?”

“I did.”

“How strong were you at that time?”

“Mmm. I’m not sure? It should be comparable to my power right now. I never expected to recover my power to this extent.....”

Azell answered her as he tilted his head to the side. Laura puzzled over his answer. Azell hadn’t been able to inherit three Dragon weapons. These weapons were destroyed. So why wasn’t there any noticeable difference in his power?

“I’m inferior to my past self in some aspects, and I’m superior in other aspects. If I’m to point out the inferior parts, I’ve lost three Dragon weapons, and my body is weaker than before. Moreover, the quality of my magical energy is a bit lacking compared to when I had use of my full Dragon Demon magic..”

His body was incredibly strong, but in comparison to his body during his prime years, it came up short. Moreover, the loss of three Dragon weapons meant his tactical advantage had lessened significantly.

“The improvement is the magical energy.”

“Magical energy?”

“If I’m to be precise, the amount of magical energy I can produce in a short period of time. I can produce over twice the amount as before.”

“How can this be? You..... In the past, you were also an Octuple master.”

Laura queried him. She couldn’t comprehend what he was saying.

It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that an Octuple master had almost reached the human limitation. In the Plain of Darkness, no one had reached this level. So there wasn’t many she could use as a

measuring stick. In the case of Duran, he had died at the hands of Azell. Duran had been superior in terms of magical energy compared to most Dragon Majins. He wasn't someone that could be easily ignored.

Azell possessed twice that amount?

"It is thanks to a technique called Dual Banding."

Azell had never talked about the Dual Banding to his party members.

He had two reasons for doing this.

First, he had never completed the technique before. He was walking through uncharted territory. He was making good use of this technique, but he hadn't consolidated it into something that could be taught to others. He wasn't confident in his ability to teach it.

Moreover, no one in his party fulfilled the criteria for learning the Dual Banding. Kairen and Leticia were Dragon Arts practitioners. Laura and Yuren were mages.

'Giles and Boar.... Their standard is too low for them to learn the Dual Banding.'

Azell had lost all of his magical energy, so he had been able to start applying the Dual Banding with his first Ring of Life.

However, Dual Banding was a technique that required an extreme sense for magic. If one wasn't a high ranking Spirit Order practitioner, one wouldn't be able to understand the basic concept of the technique. One wouldn't be able to get into the construction phase of the Dual Banding.

Suddenly, Laura spoke.

"May you show me your maximum output of magical energy?"

"Mmm. Should I give it a try?"

Azell accepted her request.

Ooh-oong.....

The eight Rings of Life had been formed around the heart in a slightly staggered manner. The beat of his heart caused them to vibrate. A torrent of magical energy flooded forth.

Goo-goo-goo-goo-goo-goo-goo.....!

He wasn't doing anything, but waves of magical energy was pouring out of him.

The ground started to shake. The radius of the earthquake ranged several hundred meters. Dirt and pebbles were floating in the air. When the earthquake started to calm down, the wind turned into a fierce gale.

“My god.....”

Until now, Laura had never experienced being overwhelmed by someone else's magical energy.

It was to be expected.

She was of the Dragon Demon race. Moreover, the Aunsarus tribe had wanted an excellent heir, so they had employed forbidden techniques to create her. She had grown up while being subjected to hellish training. Her potential Dragon Demon magic had been brought out to its full capacity.

However, she was having a hard time breathing just by being near the torrent of magical wave flowing out of Azell.

It felt as if she was on a beach as she watched a tsunami coming towards her. What could anyone do against such vast magical energy? She felt an acute sense of despair.

What's worse, Azell hadn't raised his magical energy to its maximum output yet. He had done a self assessment, so he knew his limit. However, he had wanted to monitor his power with his senses as he produced it. This was why he had brought up his magical energy in a gradual manner, and he was still increasing the

output.

It was at that moment.

“Hey, Azell. You are interfering with my training session.”

A displeased voice could be heard.

At the same time, the mountainous magical energy produced by Azell quickly diminished. He let out a bitter laugh as he spoke.

“We are also training.”

When he turned around, no one was there. The owner of the voice was Reshoo, and he was standing at a beach that was 1 kilometers away.

However, the two of them conversed as if the distance was inconsequential. They could see each other clearly, and they used their magical energy to modulate their voices. Their voices could be delivered to each other at such large distances.

“You should either do it farther away from here or you should put up a barrier. What the hell are you doing? The forest is in a complete mayhem. I’m trying to teach a very subtle technique.”

“I’ll be careful.”

“By the way, your magical energy has become outrageously large. I think you might be comparable to me.”

“Not yet. I might be comparable to your old self. Haven’t you become stronger?”

Laura was shocked at his words.

‘He has such an enormous amount of magical energy, yet he is inferior?’

She had once heard that Reshoo was the strongest in terms of Dragon Demon magic amongst the Dragon Demons.

However, the amount of magical energy shown by Azell right now had exceeded the amount of Dragon Demon magic possessed

by Almarick. He might exceed the amount possessed by Reygus after his transformation. Yet he was saying he was inferior to Reshoo?

Reshoo spoke.

“Anyways, you should be careful. Their lives are on the line when learning the Dragon Soul. It’ll be troublesome if an outside factor caused them to lose concentration.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

Azell shrugged his shoulders.

They had already stayed 10 days at Reshoo’s home to learn the Dragon Soul.

Each members of Azell’s party had their own training regiment to pass the time.

Azell sparred against the warriors of Albatan. Laura and Yuren continued to speak with Albatan. They also exchanged knowledge with the other magicians.

Kairen and Leticia were learning the Dragon Soul from Reshoo.....

As each day passed, they became indebted to Saibein.

2

“I have to treat such grievous wounds for you every day. I would like you to stop this.”

Saibein had been called here at night, and he let out a sigh. Reshoo scratched his head.

“Ah, I’m sorry. The fact that you are here makes me push them harder.”

“Ooh-ook.....”

Kairen and Leticia was on the floor, and they were moaning.

The process of learning the Dragon Soul was harsh.

The reason being one had to endure the process of one's Dragon Demon magic move in an uncontrolled manner. One had to put one's life on the line to learn this technique, so the sense of accomplishment at the end of each session was large. Moreover, one was able to acquire a huge amount of power in a very short amount of time compared to the time needed to create a Dragon weapon.

Saibein spoke.

"Their reservoir of Dragon Demon magic is large, so healing them is easy.... However, it feels as if I'm fixing dolls you have broken on a daily basis. Wouldn't it be better to do this a little bit more slowly?"

"I'm sorry, but they told me they don't have a lot of time. That is why I have to do this in a quick way. Anyways, once they learn how to summon the Dragon Soul, their own ability would have the biggest influence on what happens next."

"Hmmm....."

"You must be feeling some mixed emotions."

"That is true, but at this point, it is out of my hands."

Saibein let out a bitter laugh.

When he left the Plain of Darkness to become a resident of this forest, he had to give up his past as the son of the Dragon Demon king. He had cut ties with his comrades, and he had no longer been able to do anything for his daughter. It was unfortunate, but he couldn't break his promise.

It wasn't just about his own resolve not to break his word. Albatan wouldn't have allowed him to go back on his word.

After staring at him for a brief moment, Reshoo changed the subject.

"I heard Azell defeated the warriors of Albatan."

“He is establishing the record for the most consecutive victories.”

There were those within the forest that possessed Dragon weapons. There were also beings that had awoken their Dragon Soul. These beings were under the direct command of Albatan, and they were called the warriors of Albatan. It was the highest honor to be called a warrior of Albatan within the forest.

These beings became aware of Azell’s identity, and they had expressed their burning desire to spar with Azell.... In the past 10 days, Azell had set a winning record by notching 37 consecutive victories.

Reshoo grinned.

“It seems they’ve totally lost face. I bet everyone is grind their teeth right now.”

Chapter 174 - Another Enemy (2)

“That’s right. Reshoo-nim, will you not fight him? The only one that can break his record here is Reshoo-nim.”

The strongest residents of the forest were Dragons. It was either Albatan or Libetan. Then there was the magician Hanerosa. Hanerosa was known for his fighting ability and leadership skills. He was the administrator in charge of outer region of the forest.

Basically, Reshoo was strongest amongst the warriors of the forest.

However, he was in a bit of a unique situation. He had created the secret technique called the Dragon Soul. He also trained the warriors of the forest. This was why Albatan hadn’t required an oath of loyalty from Reshoo. He was allowed his freedom. This was why he was the only resident not under the authority of Albatan.

“It is alright for now. I’m busy teaching the Dragon Soul.”

“Mmmm.....”

“Anyways, it won’t be a battle to the death. I can’t fight him with all my might. It is the same now as in the old times.....”

When they came here during the Dragon Demon war, Reshoo and Azell taught each other. On top of that, they also got into endless sparring matches. They fought with their fists and swords. However, they never truly fought with everything on the line.

“We might have a chance to fight.... I have to be patient for now. I have a task I need to accomplish.”

Reshoo spoke those meaningful words, and he let out a bright smile.

3

Reshoo thought Kairen and Leticia were good students. Amongst all he had taught before, they had one the highest potentials. They

had learned the basics of the Dragon Soul in two weeks. This was something very hard to do.

“You should put deep import on my following words. The wakening of the Dragon Soul is different from creating a tool like the Dragon weapon.”

This was the crucial difference between a Dragon Soul and a Dragon weapon.

In the Dragon Soul technique, a Dragon Demon or a Dragon Majin was imbuing life into their own Dragon Demon magic.

Dragon Demon magic was a power that could bend reality to one's will. It was similar to the power of the Dragon where the Dragon had dominion over nature.

The difference was the fact that Dragon Demon magic was weaker than the Dragon's power, but it was more versatile.

This was the trait that had been inherited from the Demon race. To be precise, the Demon race had originated from the humans, who were weak. However, it also meant they possessed an all-purpose power. It was flexible.

When these two traits were added to the Dragon Demon magic, one was able to construct a strong image. This allowed one to create all kinds of phenomenon in reality.

Furthermore, Dragon Arts and magic were foundational techniques that increased the variety and efficiency of one's power. This meant one was able to clone one's soul using one's will. This was how a Dragon weapon was formed.

“One has to choose to make a Dragon weapon over a long period of time. For Spirit Order practitioners, a comparable example is making one's Rings of Life. For a magician, it is like creating a word of power.”

Spirit Order Practitioners crystallized their magical energy to create the Rings of Life. It was used as the source for their magical

energy.

Magicians decide on the power they want to imbue, and they created words of power. The magical energy was molded into characters. It was inscribed within one's body, and external power was injected into these characters to refined it into the form and quality one wanted.

“This is why Dragon Art's practitioners have a hard time making a Dragon weapon. During their training, they never experience the process of crystallizing their magical energy.”

Dragon Demons and Dragon Majin didn't have to go through the annoying process of crystallizing one's magical energy. They didn't need to go through the painstaking process to use their power.

From the moment they were born, they possessed a massive amount of magical energy. All core organs were given to them from birth.

These were the eyes, Dragon Demon Stone and the horns.

“One has to crystalize one's magical into a high density form. It isn't just magical energy. One has to be able to manifest one's Dragon Demon magic outside one's body. That is the Dragon weapon. Of course, one need an incredible amount of pure Dragon Demon magic, but the crystallization process takes a long time in most cases. However, the Dragon Soul is different.”

Dragon weapons were tools made through refining one's Dragon Demon magic.

On the other hand, Dragon Souls were.... Life was imbued into one's Dragon Demon magic.

“It isn't a tool. It is more correct to say that it is a different form of oneself. It only takes on the form of a Dragon, because the essence of Dragon Demon magic comes from the power of Dragons.”

This was why the Dragon Soul didn't need to go through the long

process of crystallizing the Dragon Demon magic.

It all came down to whether one could awaken the Dragon Soul with one's Dragon Demon Magic. That was it... It was a tribulation where each attempt entailed a significant amount of danger.

4

"I feel like dying."

Kairen was utterly worn out. He had his head planted on the table. He raised his head as he spoke.

"Yuren."

"Yes."

"Where did you get that book? They have books here?"

"Ah. It seems the magicians are able to produce a good enough paper. There were a lot of records binded into a book, so I borrowed some of them."

"Ho-oh."

They were making paper in this forest, and they were making books to keep records. It was quite amazing.

"What about the others?"

"They are still back there."

"Azell is still having fun?"

"He is. Are you jealous?"

"In truth, I am. Shit."

His body itched when he heard the news that Azell was sparring with the warriors of Albatan. However, the path to learning the Dragon Soul was too perilous. He didn't have enough energy to do anything else.

Kairen had a dissatisfied expression on his face when he suddenly had a thought. He asked Yuren a question.

“Now that I think about it.....”

“What is it?”

“It’s about the conversation we had last time.”

“What?”

“I’m talking about the story about Baion.”

“Ah. That.....”

Yuren finally realized what Kairen wanted to talk about. While they were being chased by Dragon Demon king worshippers, he had talked about the Guide, and he had brought up the name of Baion. Azell had awakened not too long afterwards, and events had been moving at a hectic pace. Yuren had forgotten about the conversation.

Kairen asked him a question.

“At the time, what were you trying to tell me? I suddenly remembered the conversation when I saw you.”

“Mmm. That is.....”

Yuren awkwardly scratched his cheek as he started to speak.

“Have you heard this phrase before? Duke, you don’t need a sword. What you desperately need is money and personal connections.”

“What did you just say?”

In a flash, Kairen stood up in shock.

“How do you know those words?”

Kairen looked at Yuren with shock and disbelief in his eyes.

The words spoke by Yuren had been spoken by Baion when he had been trying to establish his medical association. Baion had spoken those words in a private meeting with Kairen.

Yuren spoke.

“I’m saying it now, because... I thought my words would be more convincing if I started off with that nugget.”

“Stop beating around the bush. Get to the point.”

“You are very impatient. It is simple. I am Baion.”

“.....”

“Ah. If I’m to be precise, I used to be Baion.”

“What an absurd story.....”

“I knew it would sound absurd to you. However, when I mulled over the identity of the Guide, I came up with this theory.”

“How is this possible?”

“Reincarnation.... You probably heard about such stories now and then. I think I’m the reincarnation of Baion.”

Yuren shrugged his shoulders.

Souls were real.

No one in this world doubted this fact. No one knew what the afterlife looked like, but at the very least, they knew souls existed. The proof was with the black magicians. Souls were used in necromancy, and the creation of the Undead.

When a person died, it was assumed that a soul had two choices. It could remain in this world or it could cross over to the underworld.

If the soul remained in this world, there were cases where they became a specter or an Undead.....

“There is a theory that believes in the rebirth of a soul in a new body. This theory exists in the discipline of magic, but most people believe it is a superstition.”

“You just said it might be superstition. How is this supposed to persuade me?”

“I’m not sure about it either. At times, I experience someone

else's life through the dreams sent by the Guide. I don't see the entire picture, but I see bits and pieces of this person's life. I become this figure in the past, and I experience specific parts of the past."

Whenever Yuren had these dreams, it didn't feel as if he was a third party. It felt as if he was dreaming about something he had experienced before.

"I just can't remember it, but I believe I lived and experienced all of them before. That is what I think."

The dreams sent by the Guide had shown him many of Baion's memories. After meeting Azell, he had gained access to the memories of the time he had established his medical association. He remembered meeting Kairen.

"As I experience these events.... In recent days, I came up with a theory. I wonder if the Guide is just another manifestation of myself."

"Mmm?"

"Let us say that reincarnation exists. I might be a being that is continuously going through the cycle of reincarnation. However, the continuity between each reincarnation was severed. I don't think I'm the same person that is swapping out bodies each time. Each reincarnation shares the same soul, but we become an entirely new person each time....."

However, there was a third party that had observed his Reincarnation from the beginning. This consciousness had accrued a continuous memory of his reincarnation, and it was delivering the knowledge to him.

"I wonder if that is the identity of the Guide. In this case, the being that started the reincarnation was outstanding.... I'm thinking he might have been an amazing magician that had the ability to scar this world through his magic. I think he started the

reincarnation cycle with a specific goal in mind. That goal is probably has to do with my plight.”

“...my head hurts from hearing what you have to say.”

“I understand what you are going through. I don’t expect you to believe me any time soon.”

“I’ll try.”

“What?”

“I’ll try to believe in your story.”

“If you believe me than you believe me. How can you work on believing in me?”

“If it was before, I would have told you that you were speaking out of your ass. However, I’ve been experiencing improbable events that your story sounds plausible.”

Reygus, Almarick and Azell..... Things that he considered to be impossible was appearing in reality. IAt this moment, he couldn’t dismiss Yuren’s story as bullshit.

“However, if you are the reincarnation of Baion..... Mmmm. I wonder how he could have become you. Reincarnation sounds like a bum deal.”

“What’s wrong with me?”

“Baion was a wiseman, who cured the incurable great calamity. He put his life on the line in this endeavor, and he became the flame of hope for humanity. I want you to put your hand over your heart, and I want you to be honest. Are you someone that is comparable him?”

“Ughh. If you put it that way, I feel aggrieved. You have to take in the age difference into account before comparing our achievements. I want you to ask me that same question in 10 years.”

Kairen had a peculiar feeling as he watched the grumbling Yuren.

He hadn't personally been close to Baion. He had respected the man, so he had wanted to sponsor Baion.

Kairen had looked up to Baion. Age and his station hadn't mattered. He had fought and won against the despair that had blanketed the world. Baion was a human that had deserved Kairen's respect.

‘That man reincarnated into this guy.....’

When he heard that Yuren was Carlos' descendant, he had an easy time believing in it. Yuren had a strikingly similar appearance to Carlos. Azell had confirmed this fact, and even Almarick had remarked on it.....

However, he was having a hard time finding any commonality between Baion and Yuren. If he forced himself to find one.... They both possessed knowledge of unknown origin.

‘If everything came from the guide within his dream... It sounds plausible.’

Baion had found a thread that unraveled the Great Darkness. Everyone had been powerless up until that time. There had been some unsavory rumors that he had made a deal with a Demon. In the end, his actions had resulted in saving humanity, so no one had the gumption to bring up such suspicions.

“If your theory is correct, why doesn't the Guide reveal everything to you?”

Chapter 175 - Another Enemy (3)

“I also have a question about that point. Currently, I’m living my reincarnated life. I don’t think the Guide is holding back information to preserve my new sense of self.....”

“Why? If it is as you’ve said, the guide has a clear objective, and the guide is leading you towards a specific direction..... Why wouldn’t the Guide clear up his identity? Wouldn’t it be better if your goals is aligned with his?”

“My guess is that the Guide has set conditions he has to follow.”

“Conditions?”

“It doesn’t matter if it is me or Baion. After being reincarnated, I believe the Guide isn’t allowed to act in a way that would hinder the independence of the newly formed self. If there are two selves present, I believe memories of the two selves might overlap and merge. The confusion caused by this act might result in a completely different person emerging from the process”

“So you created another theory to support your other theory?”

“I did. That is why I can’t ask you to believe in it, since I don’t know if it is the truth.”

Yuren let out an embarrassed laughter as he shrugged his shoulders.

This was what he thought, and if Kairen didn’t believe him, it couldn’t be helped.

If Kairen thought about it, Yuren’s attitude had always been like this. His attitude remained consistent from the moment Kairen had met him. He was a hard person to trust, but his actions under duress made Kairen want to trust him.

“You are light-hearted and carefree. Baion was much more earnest and meticulous. How can a guy like you claim to be his

descendant.....”

“I’m not his descendant. I’m really him.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

5

There were a lot of Dragons within the Albatan forest.

Unlike other places, Albatan and Libetan took control and created order within their habitat. This was why there were a lot of Dragons that were reaching their maturity here. The number of Dragons that reached adulthood was easily over 1000.

Moreover, the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual was considered to be the most honorable tribulation one could go through.

When she learned this truth, Laura was puzzled.

“This place is ruled by a Dragon, so why.....”

One of Minerel’s pupil was getting ready for the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.

When one decided to go through the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, one had to notify and get permission from Albatan. Then the Dragon that will be challenged would be notified, and a future date was set. Both sides fought at peak condition.

Minerel tilted her head.

“Is it weird?”

Of course, it was weird.

The Plain of Darkness only treated the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual to be a honorable tribulation, because it allowed them to acquire massive amount of power. On top of that, it was the only way they could create a Dragon weapon. However, how could taking of a Dragon’s life considered to be honorable when this land was ruled by a Dragon?

Minerel let out a laugh.

“It is like this from Albatan-nim’s perspective. He had acquired wisdom, so he wouldn’t deny the other Dragons their rights to do the same. Wisdom is what the Dragons desire the most. Wouldn’t it be cruel for Albatan-nim to deny their chance to pursue their desire? Should the Dragons give up their desire just because he protects them?”

“Ah.....”

“After Reshoo-nim invented the Dragon Soul, the number of people attempting the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual have decreased. However, there are still many that wishes for a Dragon Soul or a Dragon weapon. The Dragon Slayer’s Ritual is essential for this. Unlike the outside world, Albatan-nim presides over the ritual. It is fair for both sides.”

“I see.....”

The Dragon and challenger wanted the fight even at the expense of their lives.

From the perspective of a civilized society, it was barbaric. However, neither Dragons nor humans were able to find an alternative method to acquire what they want.

Laura queried her.

“The Dragons... How many Dragon Slayer’s Ritual does one need to go through to gain wisdom?”

It had been several thousand years since the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual was found. However, very few Dragons had acquired wisdom during that time. There might be other wise Dragons residing in this wide world. However, Laura only knew about Albatan and Libetan.

Minerel answered her.

“I have no idea.”

“What?”

“Albatan-nim and Libetan-nim does not remember how many Dragon Slayer’s Ritual they had performed. It also depends on the opponents they faced..... However, I’m sure one or two Rituals isn’t enough.”

It was an almost never ending tribulation for the Dragons.

They had no idea when they would acquire their wisdom.

Yet they continued to fight with their lives on the line for that sliver of possibility....

“The only thing that is certain is... Each successful Dragon Slayer’s Ritual brings about a noticeable rise in intelligence. However, even in victory the Dragons possess the intelligence of a beast. The wisdom is acquired by the Dragon only at the last moment when the threshold is crossed. This is the extent of information that is known to us.”

“It is quite cruel.”

“Isn’t it?”

At Laura’s comments, Minerel let out a bitter laugh.

From the perspective of the Dragons, it was cruel. It didn’t matter if a Dragon was one step away from achieving wisdom. They could die without experiencing any results they had accrued if that last step wasn’t taken.

Minerel spoke.

“There might come a day when a more sensible person might find another way. On the other hand, people get sick, old and starve.... There might be no ideal solution to a painful death. We only had this method.”

6

Saibein was a bit uncomfortable with Azell residing within the forest.

At the same time, he was gripped with the desire to converse

more with him.

It was quite the conflicting emotion. The funny thing was the fact that Azell shared the same emotions as him.

“May I ask you for a favor?”

“What is it?”

“Will you help me persuade my daughter?”

“...I believe I was clear in spelling out my relationship with Niberis.”

Of all the people he could ask, he was asking this of Azell?

Saibein let out a sigh.

“I know. However, I have no one else I can ask for help. I’ll tell you information that will be of help to you. I believe the truth I can tell you will be worth it.”

“You have no idea what information I was able to gather outside. Do you really think you’ll be able to produce any useful information?”

“I do. I have information that’ll definitely be worth it.”

“Hmm.....”

“I want you to persuade my daughter. No, if you can't persuade her.... I want you to subdue her by force. Bring her here. Please give me a chance to persuade her.”

Azell thought about it for a brief moment. Could his information really be of any worth? He already had enough information about the inner workings of the Plain of Darkness.....

However, it was also true that he was intrigued by Saibein’s attempt at trying to persuade him. Saibein seemed. In the end, Azell nodded his head.

“I’ll attempt it. However, I cannot guarantee success. Is that fine?”

“Thank you.”

Saibein lowered his head. When he saw this, Azell’s expression turned complicated. In the past, Saibein had been the prince of a hostile enemy force. They had tried to kill each other. Now he was lowering head, while asking Azell to save his daughter.....

Saibein spoke.

“There is two crucial important information I can give you.... First, I’ll have to finish the story I didn’t finish last time. I’ll have to tell you how I got here.....”

“You said you had two reasons”

“You remembered. First... It was my wife’s death.”

When the madness descended, the remnant of his kingdom morphed into a religious organization. Saibein became tired of the Plain of Darkness.

Just spending a year or two in such an environment would make anyone want to quit. He spent over a 100 years there.... He monitored the situation that spanned longer than a human’s lifespan.

The things he loved and cherished was turning hideous. All his work had built up his hope, but he knew full well that his actions hadn’t improved anything. Still, he continued to work hard believing that things would get better. He hoped that everything he had loved once could return to what it used to be. He deluded himself as he endured through the long years.

By the time his delusion crumbled, it was a wonder he hadn’t gone crazy.

“It was an arranged married, but I loved her. At first, I pitied her, and I wanted to treasure her.... My feelings started out like that. It was funny. After a little time had passed, I realized I found my first love at my age.”

His married life with his wife Elberis was his most brilliant memory during his long stay in the Plain of Darkness. There was no tension between them, and he had been happy spending peaceful times with her. They had been so happy when Niberis was born....

Azell had a peculiar feeling as he watched Saibein, who was reminiscing on old events.

Saibein had loved his wife, and he was happy for the birth of his daughter.

This wasn't the first time Azell had experienced this. His enemies had been capable of laughter and tears. They showed they were capable of love and humanity.

Hadn't he counseled Laura about this very subject?

Even though he had encountered this a many of times, he couldn't help but feel complicated emotions arise from within him.

Saibein didn't realize Azell was feeling such emotions. He continued to speak.

"However, treachery was fermenting in the background."

Saibein spent more time wandering around the world than the time he spent inside the Plain of Darkness.

While he was gone, Elberis had been abused.

He wasn't talking about physical abuse. From the time she was young, Elberis had been sickly. Those that had called her useless in the past continued to bully her.

Elberis had always smiled in front of Saibein as if nothing was wrong.... From behind the scenes, she continued to be mocked and insulted. They told her she was useless even as a tool for propagating the great bloodline.

Even after she gave birth to Niberis, the insults never went away. Others pressured her to take drugs for fertility. They pressured her

to go through with magical experimentation.

“I was really an idiot. I realized this after she had died.”

When Saibein was with her, he had tried to shield her. No one dared to speak out of turn.

However, he had to go out for missions. Moreover, he couldn't stop branch members of her family from approaching her. They were her kin, and her tribe was one of the influential families within the ruling body of the Plain of Darkness.

“They conducted body modification experiments, so she could have more children. In the end, her body became too burdened by the stress, and she lost her life.”

When he found out the truth, Saibein had gone mad from rage and grief.

His usual self-control was nowhere to be found. He had killed the person that had authorized the experiment, and he had killed everyone that had carried out the experiment. It resulted in him eradicating Elberis' entire tribe.

At his actions, the elders reacted in anger.

However, they couldn't kill Saibein, who was the legitimate son of Atein.

They tried to imprison Saibein, but he fled the Plain of Darkness before they could.

“That means.....”

Azell furrowed his brows.

“Basically, you are a traitor.”

“That's right. However, I found this out when I talked to Laura. They covered up what I did.”

Saibein let out a bitter laugh.

Laura and the younger generation within the Plain of Darkness

were told that Saibein had went missing after fighting the Guardian Shadows. They didn't tell anyone what had happened. They had completely sealed away information that would shake the loyalty of the younger generation.

“I asked my mother to take care of Niberis, who had just went into hibernation.”

It was questionable as to whether Aincera was able to still feel love for her own child anymore. Still, she was his only option, and Aincera agreed to his request.

“My mother put my case into arbitration, but the elders were uncompromising. They sent out a hunting party to take me into custody. However, I used the fruit of the missions, which I carried out over the years.”

“Fruit of the mission?”

Chapter 176 - Another Enemy (4)

“I’ll help you find my father’s legacies.”

Atein had lived for a long period of time, and as he wandered the world, he left behind traces of himself. In the Plain of Darkness, they considered these marks to be holy, and they desperately tried to acquire them.

“At that time, I.... During the time when my wife died, I had already achieved something big. However, I became a fugitive before I could give my report.”

“What did you achieve?”

“I found my father’s secret lab.”

“That is most definitely a big deal.”

Azell was surprised.

It wasn’t uncommon for a magician to create a secret lab. The secret lab was hidden even from allies. Such locations possessed powerful defensive system, and they remained in existence even after the death of the magician. Many of the ruins Azell had discovered were of this variety.

‘When we searched his castle for hints on how to dispel the curse, we found nothing.... Maybe, the data was placed within this secret lab.’

After the Dragon Demon war had ended, Carlos constantly worked to find a way to dispel Azell’s curse. He searched Atein’s resident and lab. He tried to find clues regarding the curse, but in the end, the search had been fruitless. It was plausible that Atein had placed his important documents in a secret lab where not even his allies knew about it.

Saibein continued to speak.

“I’m not sure how my father was able to use that place during the

war. He probably used the Great Darkness. It probably allowed him to use the lab irregardless of where his body was. That is my guess.....”

“I want to say that it sounds impossible, but.....”

“If it is my father, you think he could pull it off?”

“...yes.”

Aside from his battle capabilities, Atein could seemingly do everything. Both the allied forces of the humans and the Dragon Demon king’s army believed this to be true. It was the reason why the Dragon Demon king became deified after his death.

Saibein spoke.

“Anyways, my father left behind a diary. He had recorded it a week before he met his end at the Dragon Horn Fortress.”

The content of the diary became the decisive factor that pushed Saibein to give up on everything.

7

Saibein saw despair inside Atein’s diary.

“My father didn’t love us. At the same time, his love for us was boundless.”

“Is this a riddle?”

“No. I’m just telling you the truth as it is. There are two divergent opinions within the Plain of Darkness in regards to the death of my father.....”

“I heard it from Laura. After Atein started the Dragon Demon war, it was said that he realized he had made the wrong choice. However, it was already too late to turn back. By dying against me, he gained a chance to correct the wrong..... His intent was interpreted liberally by his followers.”

“What if that’s the truth?”

Saibein asked him the question. Azell's expression turned peculiar.

"Do you really think that is an appropriate question to ask me?"

"No, this is exactly why I'm asking you that question. You were the last one to fight my father, and you were the one that ended his life."

"Mmm....."

Azell thought for a brief moment before he spoke.

"It sounds like pure nonsense. At the very least, I don't think Atein went into the fight wanting to lose. If that was true, I would have won much more easily."

"Is that so..... At the very least, you don't think father went into the battle thinking about abandoning us."

"Even after hearing my answer, it seems you haven't changed the overall premise of your view?"

At Azell's question, Saibein nodded his head.

"Azell, do you know the ideals that had led my father to create the Dragon Demon army? Do you know why he started the Dragon Demon war?"

"I have a rough idea.."

"Before the Dragon Demon war started, the DRagon Demons were affiliated with any human nations. They were usually autonomous powers. Some opposed the human nations, and others took root in locations where they were free of human influence."

Atein needed a very long time before he was able to ascend into the Dragon Demon King's seat with the Dragon Demon generals. The Dragon Demon war had lasted for a long time, but the preparation leading up to that war was several times longer.

At times, Atein spoke about his ideals to persuade his opponents.

At times, he used his martial abilities to subjugate his opponents. Then there were times when he gained support by trading away secret magic techniques. On other occasions, he solved problems present in his opponent's life. He was able to create an enormous cooperation system.

“The marriage to my mother and my birth was part of that process.”

It was akin to what the ruling class of the humans did. He brought in allies by establishing blood ties.

This was how Atein was able to form the Dragon Demon King's army. He did it, because he needed power to fight and conquer the world. He first needed the control of the world to create the ideal world.

“Everything was based on his belief in the Dragon Demon race.”

It was the belief that Dragon Demons would be able to become better rulers than humans.

It was true that Dragon Demons possessed powerful body and Dragon Demon magic. They possessed higher intelligence and longer lifespan.... From a human's perspective, Dragon Demons were closest to being the ideal being. Atein thought the same, and he believed in the potential of the Dragon Demon race.

‘Dragon Demons are born with great inborn abilities, and on average, they possess much more intelligence than humans. That is why they will be able to control their desires in the pursuit of the ideal state.’

Before the Dragon Demon war, the Dragon Demons were dispersed all over the world.

Tribal societies were the limit of social organization created by the Dragon Demons. If the gathering of Dragon Demons were large, they governed over the humans as the ruling class. They possessed longevity and ability. It was inevitable that these

characteristics were valued in small societies.

Moreover, the Dragon Demons weren't that much different from the human rulers in such a society.

The humans trusted the Dragon Demons since they were superior beings. The Dragon Demons expected the humans to work for them as a given right. During the Dragon Demon war, the attitude of the Dragon Demons in Demon King's army wasn't influenced by Atein. It arose from a pre-existing mindset.

Atein had trusted in the Dragon Demons after seeing how they behaved. It was, because he had hoped that the members of his race had the potential to act based on reason.

"However, my father despaired as he conducted the Dragon Demon war. Maybe it started before the war started....."

He taught his allies about his ideals.... However, they didn't change.

Of course, some understood and accepted what Atein was saying. However, if one looked at it from a macro view, most members used his words to justify their actions. In truth, most of their behaviors and actions hadn't changed at all.

"When I read the contents of my father's diary, it was clear that he didn't expect anything from us. He realized that he had been wrong in believing that Dragon Demons had the potential to act in a rational and reasonable manner. When he reached this conclusion, he started searching for another solution.."

Dragon Demons were the same as humans. They were both limited by the same intrinsic flaws. Even if they possessed better physique and intellect, it didn't make the character of the Dragon Demons.

They were the progeny between Dragons and humans. However, their thought process was way too similar to humans.

Azell furrowed his brows as he asked his question.

“The story is getting long... So what was his conclusion? In truth, I’m not to interest in hearing about the hopes and despair of an idealist like Atein.”

“Since you are acquainted with him, I thought you would be curious.”

“That might be true. However, I’m not curious about Atein’s thoughts and feelings. I just want information that’ll allow me to predict his future moves.”

A magician or a historian would have been burning to hear this story, but Azell was apathetic.

‘I heard such stories as I travelled here. Shit. So what?’

He had to avoid and block the imminent flood that was coming towards him. Everyone else seemed to be focused on eliminating the flood that might happen in the future. Why do people like viewing things in the macro view?

Azell spoke.

“Let me try to summarize it. Atein was..... He tried to created an ideal society by conquering the world. He realized it was an absolutely stupid idea, so he started preparing another plan. When he revives, he’ll carry out the plan he had prepared. Am I correct? Moreover, the information you are going to give me is Atein’s plan?”

“You are good at summarizing information. You are correct.”

“Just tell me the plan.”

“Azell, do you believe humans can build the characters of other humans?”

“...why are you deflecting again?”

Azell became irritated, but Saibein remained calm.

“I need to tell you this story.”

“All right. I’ll try to summon a little bit more patience. The answer to that question.... I believe it is possible to do it individually, but I don’t think it can be done to the entirety of humanity.”

“That is what I’m trying to get at. Humans do not trust each other. This was why laws were put in place and there are mechanisms to protect those laws. People can be confident in such a system if there is a power that can enforce such laws.... However, people used weak points in such a system to bring about all kinds of wickedness.”

“Are you trying to describe the base nature of humans? I don’t like it, but I’ll agree with you for now. So what does that have to do with the story you were going to tell me?”

“In the end, father thought Dragon Demons were like humans.”

“Mmmm?”

“He needed to make a method that’ll enforce his ideal system.”

“So.....”

Azell scratched his head.

“You aren’t talking about normal policy and laws, right?”

“That’s right. I don’t know the exact details, but..... Father had been preparing a method that would enforce the world to follow the ideal system he came up with.”

“.....”

Azell was at a loss for words.

The character of the individual members didn’t matter. This method would force everyone to follow laws set by Atein? Is that really possible?

‘This is beyond crazy. This is something that can only be thought up by a mad man.....’

It might be possible if one was talking about an individual or a small group. It required a lot of surveillance and coercion.

He wanted to pull this off against the whole world?

‘How is that possible?’

It was absolutely impossible.

However, the one that wanted to solve this problem was Atein.

Saiben spoke.

“I think it is absolutely impossible, but if it is my father.... You are having the same thoughts as me, right?”

“We are of like mind then.”

“I’m leaning towards the opinion that it’ll be possible for my father to pull it off. The evidence is in the records left behind in my father’s diary.”

“What is it?”

“The being that re-established the relationship between the humans and the Dragons was him. It was my father.”

“.....”

For a brief moment, Azell was struck dumb. Saibein had a bitter smile on his face as he spoke.

“Well, can you understand why I think it is possible for my father to pull this off?”

Chapter 177 - Another Enemy (5)

8

It was a night where the cloudy sky obscured the moonlight. Rehshoo stood on top of the cliff, and he was facing the wind blowing in from the ocean.

His gaze was fixed on a point beyond the dark ocean. He had been standing there for an hour. It was as if he was meditating. Azell approached him.

“What are you doing?”

“Do you think the world is different across the ocean... I was fantasizing about it..”

Reshoo didn't show any signs of surprise. He turned around as he answered Azell. When Reshoo fully turned around, Azell spoke.

“I'm sure it is the same as this place. It is a world where humans live.”

“There might not be any humans living there?”

“Then it is an animal kingdom.”

“I guess so.”

Reshoo snickered. Azell asked him a question.

“How are the two of them progressing?”

It had already been over a month since Kairen and Leticia had started learning the Dragon Soul from Reshoo.

While the two of them were going through enormous amount of hardship, it wasn't as if the other members of the party had been playing around. Laura and Yuren exchanged techniques with the residents of the forest. On top of that, they brainstormed ways to increase their skills through the conversations they had with Albatan. Azell took inventory of the powers he regained, and he

trained on how to best use these powers.

“They are about here.”

Reshoo pointed towards his neck.

Azell spoke.

“Are they still at the brink?”

“They’ve been at that state for the past week. They are strong in terms of Dragon Demon magic, and they are quite skilled in manipulating it too. It’ll happen soon. Whether they can awaken the Dragon Soul or not.... It all starts from there.”

“I see.”

“Why are you so hesitant? Did you hear something?”

“.....”

Reshoo ignored the context of the conversation as he suddenly threw out a question. Azell became silent.

Reshoo once again looked towards the night ocean, and he started to speak words that had nothing to do with the questions he asked.

“I don’t know how it looks like from your perspective, but..... You are like a remnant of a very old memories for me. It was as if you were frozen and plucked out of that era. I am awestruck everytime I see you. You probably don’t know this.”

“You don’t know how surprised I was when I saw you.”

“Still, I can relate. As a Dragon Demon, I’ve gone into a long hibernation before. In the past 220 years, I’ve only hibernated once. I slept for 20 years... The world changed a lot in that time. The fact that I lost the chance to see the change almost filled me with resentment.”

“.....”

“You are almost the same as your past self, Azell. However, I’ve

changed. Even I think I've changed into a completely different person."

"...you really have changed."

Azell let out a sigh.

After coming to this place, he hadn't conversed much with Reshoo. The emotion he felt towards Reshoo was much more complicated than the emotions he felt for Saibein.

His era had become the distant past, and he was happy to find someone that remembered him for who he was in the past.

However, at the same time.... Reshoo made him uncomfortable, since his presence hammered home the fact that time had passed.

From Azell's perspective, Reshoo had been a friend that he had deep insight into. However, the current Reshoo wasn't the one he remembered, and Azell couldn't tell what he was thinking now.

Reshoo spoke.

"However, it seems you came here to talk about a more difficult subject."

"Did you develop an ability to read the mind of others?"

"After teaching so many people, I'm able to get a measure of their thoughts."

"Jeez."

Azell couldn't help, but laugh. As expected, this wasn't the Reshoo he knew.

Reshoo spoke.

"If you are having a hard time getting your words out, you can talk to me at a later time. At the very least, you have some time left before you have to leave this place."

"No, once I start putting this off, I'll keep putting it off indefinitely. I'll just speak."

“Speak.”

“Reshoo, are you my enemy?”

“.....”

Azell firmed his resolve, and he threw his question out there. Reshoo became silent.

The night ocean produced sounds of waves, and it was the only sound that broke the silence. After being silent for a long time, Reshoo let out a bitter laugh as he asked the question.

“Why do you think that?”

“It isn’t something I came up with.”

“Then who?”

“Saibein said so. He said you might be my enemy.”

“...he did? Why would he think that?”

Reshoo was puzzled. However, Reshoo wasn’t denying Azell’s words either.

Azell spoke.

“He said he found Atein’s secret lab. Atein’s diary was there.”

“So that’s how it is? However, the diary should deal with events before the Dragon Demon war.....”

“The fact that Atein made an offer to you was in there.”

Saibein had provided two pieces of information.

‘I believe Reshoo-nim is working with my father.’

He had a hard time believing in that story.

However, he felt too uneasy at the prospect of not checking up on the information. He had to see if the information was true. That was why he had firmed his resolve, and he came here to ask Reshoo about it.....

“Moreover... You shouldn’t underestimate Saibein. I mocked him

by calling him the Simpleton Prince, but he is the son of Atein.”

Saibein was one of the top high ranking magicians within the Dragon Demon king’s army. He had also possessed one of the highest ranked Dragon weapon called the Book of Darkness. The only reason why he was called the Simpleton Prince was the fact that he couldn’t translate his prodigious talent into victories on the battlefield.....

Azell spoke.

“Saibein found out that you were connected to the Great Darkness. He used this fact as basis to guess that you’ve accepted Atein’s offer.”

“I see. I did underestimate him too much.”

“When did it start?”

Azell’s face hardened as he asked the question.

He could tell by Reshoo’s reaction that Saibein’s information was correct.

Reshoo sighed.

“If I’m to be precise, I accepted an alliance around 50 years ago. Therefore, it was around the end of the Great Darkness.”

“...Atein is dead. He is supposed to revive in the future, so how were you able to make an alliance?”

“Did you really think Atein could do nothing until he’s revived?”

“.....”

It was a story of deep import. Azell felt his chest constrict.

Reshoo spoke.

“I can’t give you the details of the alliance, but.... Hmm.. Could you retract your killing intent for now, Azell? It is true that there is a high probability that I might become your enemy.”

“You struck an alliance with Atein. How could you not be my

enemy.....”

“What if Atein has no intent on joining with those that deified him? What if he has no plan on fighting against humanity?”

At his words, Azell was momentarily at a loss for words. He had never thought about this possibility. When the Dragon Demon king Atein was revived, he had naturally assumed Atein would lead the remnant of his army. Azell had assumed Atein would bring about misfortune to the world.

Reshoo shrugged his shoulders.

“It isn’t as if I know the entirety of Atein’s plan. Moreover, I cannot tell you the parts I know either. However, if we do become enemies, it would only be after Atein is revived. We won’t know until Atein makes his move. Am I not right?”

“Mmm.....”

“I’ll say this as your friend. I won’t be your enemy before Atein is revived. I won’t do anything that will harm you.”

At his words, Azell looked in Reshoo’s eyes. From within the darkness, Azell could see Reshoo look at him with plaintive eyes.

For a long time, silence flowed between them.

Azell met Reshoo’s eyes as he pushed down his surging emotions. Azell shook his head from side to side.

“...all right. I’ll trust you.”

“Thank you.”

“Speak. Why did you make such a choice?”

“That is.....”

Reshoo let out a bitter laugh as he spoke.

“The world treats well those that are greedy and evil. On the other hand, they are cruel to those that are selfless and good.”

“.....”

“Atein knew that I would leave this forest to learn about humans, so he gave me an offer. He said he would create a world where the powerless and good people could live happily.”

At the time, Reshoo couldn't comprehend what he was talking about. Atein had beaten him, so why was he spouting such nonsense?

However, Atein had not been speaking to the present Reshoo. He was making an offer to Reshoo in the future. It didn't matter how long it took. Atein knew there would come a day when Reshoo would understand his words. When he despaired at the world created by the humans, he would come to Atein for help.

“That time came.”

When the Great Darkness arrived, Reshoo had been wandering the world. It truly was a horrible era. Everything that humans believed to be of worth was destroyed. The world was filled with fear and despair instead of trust, love and hope.

“Do you know who sage Baion is?”

“Of course.....”

When Baion's name was suddenly brought up, Azell was taken aback.

Why was Reshoo bringing up that name?

“How much do you know about him?”

Azell put together what he saw from the history books with the stories he heard from Kairen to answer Reshoo's question.

When he heard Azell's story, Reshoo spoke with a dark expression on his face.

“...I see. I never knew Kairen and Baion were connected in that way.”

Reshoo let out a bitter laugh. He had no idea Kairen was the Duke of Tarantos. This was why he had no idea there had been a tie

between Baion and Kairen.

“Baion was a truly amazing person. For a while, I watched over him.”

Baion traveled to extremely dangerous regions to find a cure for the plague brought on by the Great Darkness. This was why Reshoo had traveled with Baion to protect him.

“When the medical association was established, I thought he no longer needed my services. That is why I left him. After 10 years.... I found out that he was assassinated.”

“...he was assassinated?”

“Officially, he went missing when the medical association was starting to run smoothly.... In truth, he was assassinated. The temple sent assassins after him.”

“.....”

Azell was struck dumb.

Baion had put his life on the line to save humanity from despair. He had saved them, yet they used such a disgusting method to kill Baion?

“It was an unforgivable act. However, the general population were clueless of this fact. They didn’t know that the priests hated Baion for taking their power away from them. They were worshipers of god, yet they committed the heinous act.]”

The power held by the temples bottomed out when the Great Darkness came. The monopoly on the healing arts by the temples were broken by Baion, and the medical association was established. Instead of priests, healers were being educated. There were no paths available for the priests to regain their former power and authority.

The high ranking priests, who once held the world in their hands, harbored hatred for Baion.

It was an extremely crooked grudge. They held hatred for Baion every time they looked at their own downfall... In the end, it resulted in the assassination of Baion.

“...that incident spurred me on to accept Atein’s offer of alliance.”

When he found out the truth behind Baion’s death, Reshoo became grief stricken. He had never felt such grief before.

He had witnessed too many humans repay good with evil. If one strove to be good in life, it didn’t mean it would bring happiness. If one lived an evil life, it didn’t mean one would live a life of misfortune.

The world was fundamentally wrong. However, he had no idea how to fix such a world.

“I thought.... Maybe, Atein had a solution, and Atein already had an answer prepared for me.”

“What was the solution?”

“I cannot say. When Atein revives, you will find out.”

“Mmm.....”

Azell thought about bringing up the information he heard from Saibein in an attempt to press Reshoo for more information. However, he realized his attempt would be fruitless.

“All right. Thanks for the story. I’ll delay dealing with our relationship. Are you going to continue training Kairen and Leticia in developing the Dragon Soul? Will you watch over them?”

“Of course. Once I taken in a pupil, I take responsibility.”

“I’ll trust you.”

After speaking those words, Azell turned around. A bitter smile appeared on Reshoo’s lips as he watched Azell’s back.

Chapter 178 - The End of the Wait (1)

1

Reygus was taken aback.

‘What the hell is this?’

He had never seen this place before. He had no idea why he was here. He had no memories that could give context to what he was seeing.

‘Did someone manipulate my mind?’

Could someone who could do that to him really exist?

Soon, he decided to give up on such train of thought. He hated thinking about complicated thoughts.

If he found something he didn’t like, he would just smash it.

Gee-eee-eek, ggee-eee-eek.....

Rain was falling hard outside, and the old door swayed back and forth in the dark room. It produced a harsh sound to the ears.

Reygus could see through the darkness as if it was daytime. The sight in front of his eyes was horrifying.

The humans, who had been alive and talking only moments before, had turned into gruesome corpses. None of the corpses were whole, and an incredible amount of blood had painted the interior of the building.

“Ha-ah, ahhhhhhh.....”

In the midst of this scene, a girl was collapsed on the ground. She was letting out a tortured moan. Reygus had approached her before he knew it, and at the same time, he realized one thing.

‘Is this a dream?’

He wasn’t there. His body wasn’t present. He could only watch the scene from a certain point of view.

Was he under the influence of a magic that caused hallucination? Or maybe he was having a bad dream?

“Haaaah, ahhhhhk.....”

The girl continued to be in pain. Reygus realized that the girl was dying. She was the only one alive in this horrible scene, but that distinction would become useless soon. Her body wouldn't be able to survive its mangled state.

“...I was a step too late. So this is the reason why I regained consciousness.”

At that moment, he suddenly heard a calm voice.

Reygus flinched in surprise. It wasn't, because he hadn't been able to sense the owner of the voice approaching them. This person hadn't tried to hide his presence, so Reygus was able to hear his approaching footsteps in the hallway.

The part that made Reygus surprised was the voice itself.

‘Atein?’

It was the voice of a man that he couldn't forget even in a dream.

Soon, the man revealed himself. He was camouflaged as a human. His horns, ears and Dragon Demon Stone was hidden with magic. However, Reygus recognized him. His long black hair looked as if it was made out of jade. His eyes had a far away look, and his face was blank. The man was Atein.

“Who.....?”

The girl gasped in pain as she asked the question. She raised her head from the ground, and her pupils weren't focused.

Atein spoke.

“We've met a long time ago. I'm Atein.”

“The Dragon Demon King.....”

“That is what they call me now.”

“...how.....?”

It was unclear as to what the girl was asking. However, Atein immediately understood what she was asking.

“I heard what happened to your tribe. Afterwards, I set up a detection magic to capture the moment you awakened.”

“Did you perhaps put this over the entire continent.....?”

“That’s right.”

“Ah-ha-ha. You really are an absurd person.....”

“I hear that quite often.”

Atein spoke indifferently. He had a vacant look, so he didn’t reveal any of his emotions. It was hard to guess what he was thinking.

Atein spoke.

“Still, it is fortunate that my technique wasn’t a complete failure. If you died before I found you in your awakened state, even I would not have been able to find you afterwards.”

“Why.....?”

“It is, because I need you.”

Atein brought up a finger infused with his magical energy. He pressed his finger against her forehead, and she spoke her name. It was a name she hadn’t known in this life. He spoke her true name.

“Kayalia.”

2

<...mmmm?>

Reygus raised his head in surprise.

When Atein called out Kayalia’s name, his consciousness was brought back to the present. He realized he was walking down the cold corridor of the Dragon Demon palace.

“What’s wrong?”

An old Dragon Demon was walking next to him. It was Chanes, who had been Reygus’ lieutenant during the Dragon Demon war. Reygus raised his hand, and he covered his face. There was only his skull there.

<How long have I been out?>

“You were walking with me?”

Chanes had no idea what Reygus was talking about.

Reygus spoke in a baffled manner.

<It seems I was daydreaming.>

“Daydreaming?”

<It seems something like that can happen even with this body. That is why.....>

In mid-sentence, his surrounding became dark. The change made him suspicious as to whether he was having another dream, but he became confident that this incident was occurring in reality.

<I bet Chanes will be bewildered.>

-He can be bewildered for all I care.

Kayalia’s ghost-like figure appeared in front of him. She had copied the Vitan’s Maze to separate Reygus into a secluded space.

<You are very mean. What was that, Kayalia?>

-Oppa peeked into my dream. You violated a girl’s privacy. You are a pervert.

<That isn’t fair. I had no desire to do that.>

-It doesn’t matter if it was intentional or not. In such a situation, you have to shut up and apologize.

<I feel extremely wronged by the accusation, but I’ll do as you say. I’m sorry.>

There wasn't a hint of sincerity in his apology, so Kayalia snorted.

-All right. We both have roots in the Great Darkness, and since I'm staying close to oppa, it seems we became connected like this.

<I see. So that was your memory?>

-Correct.

<It was the memory of you meeting the king. However, you were.....>

She hadn't been a Dragon Demon. She had been dying as a human girl. In Reygus' opinion, she hadn't been disguising herself with magic. She really had the body of a human.

-I was human.

<How?>

-Until the king came looking for me, I lived as a human.

<...I'm having a hard time understanding this.>

-You already know what kind of being I am.

<You were the head of your clan until you became engaged to the king. You used a secret technique to continue your existence from your past life. This secret technique was crucial in developing the technique that revived Almarick and me.>

Kayalia's tribe were unsociable. They created their society in a perilous land, and they had lived for a thousand years in a closed society.

The tribe was started by a 1st generation Dragon Demon, and the Dragon Demon had created the secret art of Transmigration. One could live beyond their allotted lifespan. This magic made them practically immortal. Kayalia had been worshipped as the goddess of this tribe. This was Kayalia's identity.

When she felt her life nearing its end, she performed a ritual to

be reborn as her own descendant. However, it was hard to differentiate which descendant she was transmigrated into. It required time and opportunity for her to awaken from her transmigration.

-Even if the secret technique could allow me to pursue immortality, it wasn't perfect.

After several transmigration, small problems started to pop up.

There were omissions to her memories, or she had some mental problem. There was a time when a curse made her suffer from ill health. It shortened her lifespan.....

-The soul is influenced by the body more so than people think. If one is reborn as a new existence several dozen times over the long years, the quality of the original soul degrades.

Small breakdowns starts to happen, and crucial problem starts to occur.

<What kind of problem?>

- I became two people.

<Mmm?>

-I was supposed to awaken as a single entity, but I was awakened in two people.

She awakened within siblings, who were identical.

It was Kayalia and her twin brother Kaydika.

The divinity the tribe had absolutely believed in started to break down at that point.

-The tribe was divided into those that advocated for me, and those that advocated for Kaydika. Both sides fought each other. Moreover, Kaydika and I loved each other, but at the same time, we hated each other.

Before the awakening, Kayalia and Kaydika were twins that had

boundless love for each other. However, after the awakening, their hatred for each other became boundless.

It wasn't the influence of the other people around them. Her soul had been split into two, and the two siblings were in pain when they realized that their own uniqueness was undermined by each other's presence.

-We knew it by instinct. The only way to escape this torment was to kill the other. There could be only one.

The tribe broke into two, and they fought. It spurred a codestruction.

-Before my last moment came, I started the ritual for transmigration. However, it was unstable. I didn't have the luxury to prepare the whole ritual.

She had lived for a very long time through transmigration, but her existence came to an end with Kayalia and Kaydika.

That was what everyone had thought.

However, Atein was of a different mind.

-The king knew my ritual was incomplete, but he thought there was a possibility of it succeeding.

This was why he had done something ridiculous. He placed a detection magic over the entire continent. It would alert him the moment I awakened again. He had done this while he was conducting a war against the whole world.

Kayalia had been unaware of his efforts. She had lived her life after being transmigrated into a human girl.

-I was treated with contempt as a cursed child. In the end.....

A bitter smile appeared on her lips.

She had died at the hands of the humans she had trusted.

After she was transmigrated into a human, she had lived an

unassuming life. She lived in a city where there was an institution that trained magicians. The magicians were very closed in terms of teaching their secret techniques. However, they had no choice, but to open themselves when an enemy of humanity had appeared. They couldn't discriminate in their teachings when faced with the threat of the Dragon Demon king's army.

However, the war continued to deteriorate, and the magicians had nowhere to run away. Their city was put under siege.

Since the city had many magicians, they were able to mount a fierce defense, and they planned on holding out for the day when they would get rescued..... However, in several days time, their enemies poisoned the lake. The city was sealed up, and the only source of water was the lake. This drove the residents of the city into despair.

They had thought the city was safe. When this flimsy belief was destroyed, it dawned on them that their deaths were imminent. The humans lost all sense of reason.

The teenage magicians, who had studied under the same teacher as her, subdued and violated her. She had been someone with no background. It was horrendous, but their actions served as a catalyst that had awakened her.

<Mmmm.....>

Reygus felt awkward, so he scratched at his helmeted head. Then he realized his gesture was meaningless, so he awkwardly asked his next question.

<You met the king when you were about to lose your life as a human. What happened afterwards?>

He didn't know how he should console her, so he chose to ignore the whole thing. At Reygus question, Kayalia let out a laugh.

-Pfft! .

<What's so funny?>

-It just is. As expected, oppa is cute.

<Mmmm.....>

When Reygus first met Kayalia, she was already a Dragon Demon girl.

If she had died and transmigrated during that time period, the timeline didn't match. Moreover, she had been at the brink of death, so she couldn't have made preparations for her ritual.

-The king had made preparations a long time ago in an attempt to persuade me.

<If it's the king, he would be able to do it. Is there really a secret technique that allows a human to be made into a Dragon Demon?>

-No. Such a technique doesn't exist. At the very least, it doesn't exist as far as I know.

<So how did he do it?>

Chapter 179 - The End of the Wait (2)

-The king had prepared a vessel that had lost its soul. He regenerated the body that was killed in the fight against Kaydika.

<.....>

-If I taught him the secret art of Transmigration, he said he would make improvements on the technique. He would return my soul to my previous body. That was the king's offer.

<So it really is a technique that can revive the dead?>

-It is. This can be used on those that died a long time ago....

<Wait a moment.>

Reygus tilted his head in puzzlement.

<I'm pretty sure you said.... Your tribe rules dictated that any information regarding the technique can only be exchanged between man and wife. That is why the king proposed to you.....>

-That's right.

<Your story doesn't add up.>

-I am the tribe, and I am its law. That is why I made up that rule on the spot, and I used it as an excuse to make the king propose to me.

<.....>

Reygus looked at her in a dumbfounded manner.

-He started talking about his ideal world in front of a dying person. He talked about needing my secret technique to achieve this goal. He tried so hard to convince me that I should live and share in his ideal. He was so loveable at that moment. If I was going to live again, I thought I would like to tightly hold onto him.

<...ha-ah.>

Reygus' shoulders slumped as if air had gone out of him.

Kayalia had dreamy eyes as she looked up into the air. She spoke.

-Oppa knows what happened afterwards.

While living as a human girl, she had lost faith in humanity. This was why she had accepted Atein's offer. On top of that, she went around gathering the scattered remnants of her tribe.

They had thought she was dead, yet the leader of their tribe had appeared right in front of them. She had come back from dead. They sang her praises as if she was the second coming. Her tribe joined the Dragon Demon king's army.

-I believe sir Almarick and my body was revived using the improved technique. Currently, the king is using the very same technique to recover his body. It should be noted that it took him a long time to restore our bodies. In his case, the remnants of his body wasn't left behind, and he had to restore his body at an entirely different location. Of course, it isn't an easy task.

<He learned the secret art of Transmigration from you, yet he chose this method to revive himself. Is that right?>

-Yes.

<Well, it was always hard to discern what the king was thinking. He probably has his own reasons for doing so.>

-Everything he thinks up is so magnificently large in scale. It is hard to understand his actions if one is too close to him. I think this falls in the same category....

Kayalia continued to tilt her head in puzzlement as if she couldn't understand Atein's decision.

Reygus, who had been looking at her, asked a question.

<What was your relationship with Azell?>

-That is.....

At his words, Kayalia had a complicated smile on her face as she spoke.

-He saved me from a certain death by the hands of humans. He also told me that it was alright for me to treasure myself more as I live my life.

She closed her eyes as she remembered her old memories.

3

The Dragon weapons were constructed over a long time. Each Dragon weapon was a unique tool, and one had to go through a painstaking process to make the Dragon weapon.

On the other hand, one awakened a Dragon Soul.

It didn't require a long process. It was a matter of if you can do it or not.

The process of awakening the Dragon Soul was like having a conversation with oneself.

There was an essence infused within an individual's Dragon Demon magic. The essence originated from a Dragon. This power allowed one to forcefully control nature through one's will. Dragon Demon magic was a fusion of human wisdom and the power of the Dragon, which had control over nature. The fusion allowed Dragon Demon magic to possess strength and versatility.

When one learned the Dragon Soul technique, it awakened the will of the Dragon, which was the basis for the Dragon Demon magic.

This was why the familiar could move at an instinctual level. It was like breathing. The Dragon Soul allowed the familiar to escape the control of the Dragon Demon magic, and it could move through its own free will.

This was when the true conversation started.

A being that was a clone and a sworn brother was born. The owner of the Dragon Demon magic had to put one's life on the line to start a conversation with this being.

One had to use one's will, the techniques that governed the Dragon Demon magic and one's stamina to guide the being that was capable of communication.

This was how the will of the Dragon Demon magic transformed into a Dragon Soul.

Hooooooooooooo.....!

A gale swirled around the region. The trees shook as if they were about to be broken. Leaves and grass flew into the air. Reshoo stood in the middle of this gale as his bluish-white hair whipped crazily around him.

"If you don't put it to sleep, you'll become exhausted soon."

"I know."

The one to answer was Kairen. His black hair remained calm within the gale. It was an unreal sight, yet the reason for this phenomena was clear.

He had caused the gale.

It was as if he was standing within the eye of the storm. The place he stood was the only location that had escaped the effects of the gale. Moreover, a green Dragon was moving at the heart of winds.

"So this is what it feels like."

Kairen mumbled to himself.

He had awakened his Dragon Soul.

He could feel it. The Dragon Demon magic flowing through his Energy Pulse was moving, and it had a will of its own.

An unknown being had been born within him. It felt as if he was looking into a mirror after not seeing himself for a very long time. The image within the mirror was extremely familiar, yet at the same time, it was unfamiliar.

Kairen's Dragon Soul possessed power that was reminiscent of a

Storm Dragon. Originally, his power hadn't dealt with any specific properties. However, this fact hadn't been a detriment in him learning how to control his newly gained abilities. He was used to dealing with powers possessing a variety of properties through the Dragon Arts.

When the gale subsided, Reshoo grinned.

"I thought it would take you much longer than Leticia. However, you were only two days late."

"Why did you think that?"

Leticia had awakened her Dragon Soul two days ago.

Kairen realized he had fallen behind her, and this fact had vexed him. This was why he had pushed himself to the limit, and he was finally able to awaken his Dragon Soul on this day.

Reshoo answered him.

"You hadn't known your own essence."

"Essence?"

"Leticia possesses the essence of a Frost Dragon. Leticia didn't have this knowledge. However, she used the power of Frost even when she was using the Dragon Arts. She knew at an instinctual level as to where her abilities had arisen from."

"Ah. So that's what you meant by those words."

Kairen understood what Reshoo was trying to say.

Whether it was a Dragon Demon or a Dragon Majin, they had an origin in a Dragon.

Their ancestors were the 1st generation Dragon Demons, and they were born from the fusion of a Dragon and a Demon. Their essence was dependent on the Dragon that had fused with the Demon.

In the case of Kairen, he had the essence of a Storm Dragon. He

hadn't known this until he had awakened his Dragon Soul.

Suddenly, Kairen asked him a question.

"Reshoo, do you know Leticia's past?"

"I do. Why?"

"Something is a bit off."

"What is it?"

"If it is as you've said, Leticia's essence is inherited from Almarick, right? So why does she have the essence of a Frost Dragon?"

Almarick's Dragon weapon was the Storm's Scream. It had dominion over thunder. Wasn't that power totally unrelated to the power of Frost?

Reshoo let out a bitter laugh.

"In the case of Leticia, her birth process was special. A variety of bloodlines had mixed over the generations to create her. That is why she had no idea what her essence was."

"I see. It makes sense since she is a Dragon Majin....."

"What about your parents, Kairen?"

"I'm not sure. They were both Dragon Demons, but I have no idea what abilities they possessed."

"I sense a story there. Both your parents were Dragon Demons. It is rare to see such an occurrence in human society."

"That's right. It was only possible, because it was within several generations of the Dragon Demon war."

The number of Dragon Demons living within human society was low. This was why it was rare for Dragon Demons to marry each other. It was more common to see a Dragon Demon marry a Dragon Majin or a human.

However, Dragon Demon's blood were thicker than human

blood.

If a Dragon Demon mated with a human, their offspring would be a Dragon Majin. A union between Dragon Majins produced a Dragon Majin. It was the same for a union between a Dragon Majin and a human.

As Dragon Majins continue to copulate with humans in each successive generation, it took a very long time for their blood to become diluted. It took a very long time for their descendants to become wholly human.

On the other hand, a union between a Dragon Demon and a Dragon Majin produced a Dragon Demon.

The sex or the purity of the Dragon Majin didn't matter. The partner just had to be a Dragon Majin. A union between a Dragon Demon and a Dragon Majin always produced a Dragon Demon.

This was why there were so many Dragon Demons in this world despite there not being too many 1st generation Dragon Demons.

Suddenly, Reshoo spoke.

"However, I'm a bit surprised that you are attempting this right now. Aren't you worried? Your perturbed heart may pose a potential risk. That is why I wanted you to wait for the end result."

"I want to ask you the same question. Aren't you worried about her?"

"I am worried, but she chose this fight. I just have accept whatever result that comes out from it."

"Hmmm....."

As expected of Leticia's teacher, he looked sentimental on the outside, but he was bone chillingly cold in accepting matters of life and death.

Kairen put his Dragon Soul to sleep then he turned to look into the distance.

The gale had died down, and he could hear the deafening roar in the distance. He was several kilometers away, but it was apparent that a fierce battle was ongoing at that moment.

“My comrade put her life on the line to attempt this. The desire of not wanting to lose to her has become stronger. That is why I’m going to do it.”

“You really hate losing.”

Reshoo laughed as if he found it amusing.

Leticia was fighting in the distance.

She had completed her Dragon Soul two days ago, and she had received permission to carry out the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual from Albatan.

The fact that she was lacking power had been made apparent in her fight with Almarick. She had gained the Dragon Soul, but she knew she needed a bigger power for her upcoming fights.

‘If I die here, it means I would have died in the future.’

After saying those words, she made her decision to attempt the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.

‘I trust in the fact that you aren’t an idiotic woman. You won’t die after saying such words. I believe in you, Leticia.’

Kairen silently sent his feeling of support towards her.

4

As the light lessened, Leticia slowly opened her eyes.

She had been victorious in the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual. The Frost Dragon had given everything of itself to the victor.

After fighting desperately for several hours, Leticia had reached her limit. However, her entire body was surprisingly filled with energy.

Moreover, she could feel an enormous unrefined power within

her. It was a power that she had been unable to make her own.

“So this is what it feels like.”

Leticia mumbled to herself.

Azell’s explanation had been vague, but she was now able to understand what he had been talking about. She just had to refine this power, and she would be able to repeat this process. She was sure she would be able to exceed Almarick using this process.

Clap, clap, clap, clap, clap.....

As she was savoring this feeling, Leticia heard the sound of clapping. It broke her reverie.

“Congratulations.”

It was Azell. He had attended the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual as an observer.

Leticia spoke.

“My preparation is complete. I want to take more time to be able to attempt another Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, but I’m assuming we don’t have the luxury to stay here any longer?”

“Probably not.”

It was hard to gather information from within the forest. Albatan had a general idea of what was happening across the continent, but he had shown no inclination in departing this knowledge to Azell’s party.

Even if they didn’t have any information, they knew they didn’t have the time to continue their training. The Keepers of the Prophecy had been the governing body of the Guardian Shadows. They were no more. This probably meant the Plain of Darkness would have stepped up their level of activity.

Azell’s party had remained here despite knowing this fact. They had determined that the Dragon Soul was needed in the upcoming fights. Since Kairen and Leticia had gained the Dragon Soul, their

stay in the forest had come to an end.

Suddenly, Leticia asked him a question.

Chapter 180 - The End of the Wait (3)

Suddenly, Leticia asked him a question.

“Did you resolve your indecision?”

“Maybe.”

Azell let out a bitter laugh.

He hadn't told his associates about Reshoo partnering up with Atein. He hadn't wanted to break the concentration of his associates when they were learning the Dragon Soul from Reshoo.

Leticia was able to read the indecision in Azell's attitude.

However, his feelings regarding Reshoo was different from what she was reading from him.

Azell looked far into the distance as he mumbled to himself.

“A lot has changed. A lot of stuff.....”

His gaze headed towards the mountain peak of Laus.

His old friend Carlos was there. They had been such close friends that they would have given their lives for each other.

He couldn't say for certain that Carlos was still alive, but a part of him existed in this world. Carlos had been waiting for him, and this fact was touching. At the same time, Carlos had suffered under hardships over the long years, and Azell was afraid to witness what changes those hardships had brought about in Carlos.

He had been shocked when he saw the changes that had occurred within Reshoo. The shock he would feel at meeting Carlos wouldn't hold a candle to the shock he felt for Reshoo. He had a gut feeling that this would be the case, so he considered himself fortunate for being able to spend some time inside the forest. It allowed him to put off the meeting.

However, his time here was at an end. Azell wanted to meet

Carlos, but at the same time, he desperately didn't want to meet him either. These two realities was about to clash against each other.

Azell spoke.

"It has always been like this. It doesn't matter if I'm ready or not. If I have to do something, I just have to face it."

"I don't think that's how it should be."

"What do you mean?"

Azell was puzzled by the point Leticia was trying to make.

She spoke.

"If the man named Carlos is truly your precious friend, shouldn't you treat him with honor? He went through all kinds of pain to wait for you. It would be a discourtesy to show up in front of him without a firm resolve."

"....."

Azell had a stupid expression on his face. It was as if he had been punched in the face.

For a long while, he wasn't able to speak then his lips started to twitch. Soon, he was letting out an unburdened laughter.

"You are right. It really is like that."

Carlos had done so much for him. He even worried about Azell, who would be awoken long after his death. He had made so much arrangements for Azell, because he had been worried about Azell.

That is why it didn't matter how much Carlos had changed. It was his duty to face Carlos face to face.

"Thank you."

"I'll consider this debt paid against what you have taught me."

Leticia snorted as she left.

Azell's party left for the mountain peak of Laus. It was four days after Leticia had conducted the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

Leticia had used those four days to get a handle on the power she had acquired in the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. She also learned the basic uses of the Dragon Soul with Kairen.

On the day of their departure, Leticia went to see Reshoo before the sun came up. Reshoo had told her that he wouldn't be seeing her off.

"What's up?"

Reshoo asked the question as if he had known she would visit him. Leticia didn't speak for a long time as she looked at him.

"I heard it from Azell."

"What did he say?"

"He said you might become our enemy."

"I guess he really told you."

Reshoo let out a bitter laugh.

In truth, he never thought Azell would hold back the truth from his colleagues. If a truth like this was kept secret, there were advantages and disadvantages that came with such a decision. If they were to meet Reshoo as an enemy in the future, it would shock them. It was better to tell them at an earlier date, so they could prepare themselves for the fight.

Leticia spoke.

"Is that the reason why you and Azell didn't reveal your true powers?"

"Yes."

While they resided in the Albatan forest, Reshoo and Azell hadn't revealed their true capabilities. Even when Azell released his

magical energy in front of Laura, he had left plenty of power left in reserve.

Reshoo queried her.

“Do you resent me?”

“We aren’t enemies yet. Not yet.....”

Leticia’s eyes were cold. However, Reshoo could read the complicated emotions that was being suppressed deep down within her.

She spoke.

“If a time comes when we meet again as enemies, I won’t resent you. It is the same now as in old times. I will be thankful to you.”

“Leticia.”

“I’ll just tell you this one thing.”

Leticia raised her hand to cut off what Reshoo was about to say.

“When the time comes, I’ll be the one to take your life.”

“.....”

“You seem to have a deep connection with Azell, but I won’t yield the opportunity to him. Either you die or I die. We must settle this between us.”

Leticia displayed a mighty determination. Reshoo smiled as he looked into her eyes.

“I never taught you to be like that.”

“You taught me not to obsess about one on one battles. You told me to be willing to get help from my comrades to achieve victory at all cost.”

It didn’t matter what kind of situation Leticia faced. She set her priorities before she acted. She didn’t get caught up with emotions, and she minimized the chaos that arose within a battle. These general principles had been taught to her by Reshoo, and it was the

reason why she was able to survive the fight against the Plain of Darkness.

However, she had changed a little bit after she acquired comrades. While she continued to pursue her own safety above all else, there were things that were more important to her than the prospect of future fights now.

“...I'll probably do as you advised. You might think it cowardly, but I'll find the best plan to end you.”

Leticia didn't deny it. The fight with Reshoo was her responsibility, but she wouldn't hesitate to borrow the power of others to win against him.

She was aware of the difference in power. She would never be able to win against Reshoo in a one on one battle.

Reshoo spoke.

“It seems I hadn't taught you in vain.”

“You are a bad teacher.”

“Why?”

“You taught your student to act in a certain way, yet you won't follow your own teachings.”

“.....”

Leticia was well aware of Reshoo's personality. Reshoo had drilled into Leticia that she had to prioritize survival and victory above all else.

However, Reshoo moved within a different set of rules.

Reshoo shrugged his shoulders.

“I have no rebuttal to that point.”

“If you do become my enemy, I don't want you to die in an unknown place. At the very least, don't get killed by some random person.”

“I’ll try not to.”

“Good.”

After she told him what she had to say, Leticia unhesitatingly turned her body away from him. As she moved away from him, Reshoo suddenly called out to her.

“Leticia!”

Leticia stopped walking. However, she didn’t turn around.

“It was good to see you again.”

“...hoong.”

Leticia snorted as she moved into the distance. However, her expression was crumpled from the pain she was feeling.

6

It was a long ways away from the mountain peak of Laus.

The Albatan forest was vast, and the Atisan mountain range separated the Albatan Forest and the Plain of Darkness. It was a natural barrier. The mountain range was enormous and perilous. All kinds of danger lurked within the mountain range.

On the day of his departure, Albatan asked Azell a question when he came to say farewell to Albatan.

“You refuse to ask me the question.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’m talking about the deal I made with Carlos.”

Carlos had taught Albatan a technique of massive value. Azell’s party was taught the Dragon Soul technique in return. Carlos resided in the vast and perilous land. He worked towards ending the unresolved fight of his era, and he prepared for the future when Azell would awaken from his sleep.

Of course, Azell was curious about the content of the deal.

Dragon Soul was a surprising technique. In an era where the world had even forgotten about the Dragon Slayer's Ritual, this technique was unbelievably valuable.

Azell had realized the need to strengthen his party members, and this technique had been like a rain during a famine. Azell could have transferred his Dragon weapons to his allies, but it would have lessened his own powers in the process.

Did Carlos really predict all of this? Or....

'No, he just took all possible steps within his power.'

It was the same during the Dragon Demon war.

Carlos didn't have the ability to look into the future unlike the legendary sage in the legends. However, Carlos had decided to prepare for all the possibilities of the future he could think up. Aside from the plans Azell had come across, there were probably countless arrangements that was unknown to him. Azell had been able to stumble across a couple of these arrangements by pure luck.

"I am curious. However, I want to hear it from him."

"It seems you've made up your mind."

"A woman gave me an advice that I should be more courteous to my friend."

Azell let out a bitter laugh as he thought about the words spoken by Leticia.

Albatan spoke.

"The technique taught to me by Carlos was a curse."

"Curse?"

Azell's eyes widened. He hadn't expected this answer.

Albatan raised his claw to point at Azell.

"It was the curse placed on you by Atein."

"Why would you want....."

“Why did Atein put a curse on you? Did you ever think about the reasons behind his action?”

“I got in the way of his ambitions, and he probably wanted to take revenge against the person, who took his life.”

“Do you really think Atein would act based on such reasons?”

“.....”

The most obvious answer was shot down. He wanted to deny Albatan’s words, but a part of him agreed with his words.

Albatan enjoyed the confused reaction of Azell. He spoke.

“After being preoccupied with this question over the years, he finally found out the reason behind Atein’s actions. Moreover, he passed on the curse that he had been able to analyze.”

“What was the reason behind Atein’s action?”

“You can hear it from Carlos. It’ll be a great conversation starter for friends that hadn’t met for a long time.”

“As always, you are quite perverse.”

“Isn’t it the joy of being old?”

Azell sighed as he spoke. Albatan let out a sly smile. It was almost unbelievable that a Dragon could make such an expression. Azell lowered his head after he witness the Dragon’s expressive face.

“Thank you for your kindness.....”

“If you live to acquire the answer, I want you to come back. I want you tell me the answer you acquired.”

“Which answer are you talking about?”

“You’ll have to find that out for yourself too.”

“If I feel like it, I’ll do so.”

Albatan snorted at Albatan’s mischievous words.

Azell's party moved quickly.

For the past two days, they moved with plenty of energy left in reserve. However, they started moving like the wind on the fourth day when they entered the Atisan mountain range.

“Ooh. This place is no joke.”

Yuren had flown into the air, and he had been buffeted by the turbulent winds. Yuren shook from the cold as he hugged himself.

Was it because they were getting closer to the Plain of Darkness? The temperature at the Atisan mountain range was quite cold, and there was a bite to the winds. Yuren was unable to fly above a certain altitude.

“It seems we won't be able travel in comfort. We'll have move along this mountain range.”

The Atisan mountain range didn't have any paths that looked traversable by humans. If the members of Azell's party hadn't possessed superhuman abilities, they would have labored to even make it to the entrance of the mountain range.

Azell spoke.

“I can see why this place is called the natural barrier between the Plain of Darkness and the Albatan forest.”

The Atisan mountain range was enormous and perilous. This was why humans refused to step onto this mountain. According to some rumors, there were dangerous beings that frequented this mountain range. They were beings that were used to such harsh conditions.

Laura queried him.

“Have you been here before?”

“Nope..”

“So how can you say.....”

“I’m just saying you guys should be on alert. I was able to give you guys a rough idea on how to prepare for the Albatan forest. I cannot do that for this place..... Ah, wait a moment.”

In the midst of saying those words, Azell suddenly had a thought.

“Laura, have you been here before?”

“Yes.”

“.....”

Azell’s expression was a sight to behold. When his companions started to snicker, he cleared his throat.

Chapter 181 - The End of the Wait (4)

Azell's expression was a sight to behold. When his companions started to snicker, he cleared his throat.

"Hmm hmm. You should have told me sooner."

"You stepped forward like a know it all before I could speak to you. You also like to get the first word in."

He was at a loss for words.

Azell quietly lowered his head.

"Since you've experience being here, please give me advice."

"I'm not familiar with this region."

"....."

"We came deep into this mountain range for training and reconnaissance. However, we never crossed over to this place."

It was to be expected. The Atisan mountain range was unusually vast. If she had entered from the side of the Plain of Darkness, she would have needed to travel a great distance to reach this point.

Azell queried her.

"Do you think we have enough supplies?"

"I believe we'll be ok. However, we should start catching animals we come across to prepare in advance."

"Hmm....."

They were in the 7th month of the calendar. It was still summer, so the climate wasn't cold. However, the temperature within Atisan mountain range was noticeably lower than the Albatan forest. As they entered deeper into the mountain range, it would get worse.

Kairen spoke.

“Thankfully we have guides.”

“I guess so.”

The Guardian Shadows had accompanied Azell’s party to the Albatan forest, and they were still present. They were actually leading the way from the front. From the perspective of Azell’s party, it was a fortunate turn of events.

Yuren looked at his surroundings as he spoke.

“Are their numbers growing again?”

It was as he said. The number of Guardian Shadows was growing.

The terrain was so rough that one could only count a limited number of Guardian Shadows with the naked eye. Still, they were pretty open in letting their presence known, so Azell’s party knew that their numbers were increasing.

Soon, the sound of battle could be heard in the distance.

Oooh-ohhhhhh.....!

Kwah-roo-rong, kwahng.....!

The sounds of fierce roars, cries and explosions were mixed in together as it echoed.

Azell’s party realized that the Guardian Shadows were conducting battles. Kairen furrowed his brows.

“Are they eliminating potential risk factors for us?”

“I believe so.”

Azell realized at some point that there were at least 500 Guardian Shadows, and this was the lowest of his estimates.

“I’m not sure how dangerous this place is, but we won’t have to worry too much unless we encounter a Dragon”

“Still, we have to keep up our fast pace.”

Kairen pointed out this fact. Naturally, everyone turned to look

at Laura.

The problem was the Vitan's Chalice. Their enemies could track them down by locating the Vitan's Chalice.

This fact hadn't mattered when they resided within the Albatan Forest. However, they should have realized by now that Azell's party was once again on the move. If they were lucky, their enemies would have stationed their troops along Plain of Darkness. This would happen if they thought Azell's party would try to enter into the Plain of Darkness. If they were unlucky.....

"Almarick and Reygus will bring their elite forces against us."

"It is probably the latter. There is a high probability that they are already moving against us."

This was why Azell's party had been in a hurry after they left the Albatan Forest.

They knew that Carlos' safe-haven was located on the mountain peak of Laus. Laus was closer to the Plain of Darkness compared to the Albatan Forest.

If they were unlucky, their enemies might be waiting for them. They had to avoid that possibility.

'It'll also be a problem once I meet Carlos.....'

He didn't know what state Carlos was in. Moreover, he couldn't predict what he would do once they met.

How would Carlos respond if enemies attacked while they were meeting in his safe haven? Was the place capable of defending against attacks?

He had too little information. Even if he tried to initiate a conversation with the Guardian Shadows, he didn't think he would gain anything. In the first place, they were short on the ability to converse. They also seemed to know very little.

'I guess I have no choice, but to go there first.'

Azell could only resign himself to this possibility.

Fortunately, they were moving really fast, because the Guardian Shadows were leading the way. The Guardian Shadows weren't impeded by the terrain, so their speed was faster than Azell's party in the long run. The party only stopped for a three to four hour break whenever they found a suitable location. They moved through night and day. This was possible, because the Guardian Shadows took care of most of the fights.

"I think there are over 2,000 of them now?"

Kairen had climbed up to an elevated location, and he was baffled. Azell queried him in a playful manner.

"Why don't you try to get an accurate count?"

"Ho-oh. It has been awhile, but it seems you want to act like a teacher again. I'll willingly accept the challenge."

"Why don't you try it too, Leticia?"

"Are you trying to create a contest between your students? Hmmmm."

Leticia agreed to do the challenge. The two of them closed their eyes, and they expanded their senses. They started discerning the number of Guardian Shadows present for the competition.

Laura spoke.

"They are doing it inefficiently. Their number is..... Oohp."

She immediately casted her detection magic, and she was able to discern their numbers using magic. Laura was about to tell them the answer, but Azell covered her mouth with his hand.

"....."

Laura's mouth was sealed, so she glared at Azell with a sullen look. When Azell laughed, she pinched the back of his hand.

"That was rude."

“I apologize.”

Azell lowered his head in a sly manner. Laura snorted.

Soon, Leticia opened her eyes as she spoke.

“At this point in time, there are 2,630 of them. They are slowly growing in number.”

“You already counted all of them?”

Kairen was taken aback. He had counted only half her number.

Azell grinned as he spoke.

“That is the correct answer. As expected, Leticia is good at such tasks.”

“How can this be? Counting people is one of my specialties.....”

Kairen’s expression crumpled.

He was a knight, and a lord of a large territory. He was quite good at counting large number of people. He was experienced at it, since he had commanded a large number of soldiers. So how did Leticia count so much faster than him?

Azell spoke.

“I’ve expected this result.”

“Why?”

Kairen asked as if he couldn’t accept Azell’s words.

Azell gave him an explanation.

“You aren’t proficient in the cloning technique. This isn’t the case with Leticia. That is the difference.”

“Are you talking about the ability to do multiple things at the same time?”

“That’s right.”

One’s aptitude towards the cloning skill was dependent on one’s ability to multitask.

Kairen could use the cloning technique, but he could only use it for a brief amount of time. He usually used it to confuse his opponents.

He couldn't make his clones have a sense of presence when he moved them

In terms of the cloning technique, Azell had reached the pinnacle. He could make numerous clones look as if it was the real one, and he could maintain them for long periods of time. He could also freely change their shapes.

The Dance of the Shadows technique could be used when one reached such a level. Basically, he was able to reach a state called Incarnation in the Dragon Arts. He was able to give substance to his clones.

This wasn't something one could do even if one's standard of technique was high. Aptitude was a big factor.

Spirit Order and Dragon Arts practitioners were divided into two categories. The first category included those that were able to quickly accomplish one task. The second category was those that could juggle many tasks at the same time.

Kairen was in the former category. This meant that he was able to create enormous amounts of power in a short amount of time. He was able to create explosive power, and he could wield it with surprising amount of precision.

Leticia was in the latter category. She used powers of different attributes to use her cloning technique, and she was able to use various high level techniques.

Suddenly, Kairen spoke.

"Is that why Reshoo doesn't have any profound knowledge of the cloning technique?"

"From what I knew from before, what you say is true. It is still probably true today."

Azell could tell by looking at Leticia. She hadn't learned much from Reshoo about the cloning technique. The cloning technique she used was from the Plain of Darkness. She was taught it, because she had been one of the candidates in running to become Almarick's heir.

She had steeply increased her proficiency in the cloning technique after she met Azell.

'Maybe, it is because she is of Almarick's blood.....'

During the Dragon Demon war, Almarick had been the best at using the cloning technique if Azell was taken out of the picture. He was second only to Azell.

Kairen grumbled.

"Shit. I have never been jealous of the cloning technique until I met you....."

"One can't be good at everything."

8

In the Plain of Darkness, they were moving in a different direction than Azell's party had predicted.

It was true that troops were being dispatched, but their destination wasn't the Atisan mountain range.

"We aren't getting a response. It is worrisome. Is this Albatan's doing? Or is it Carlos Rizester's doing?"

Almarick felt leery.

Within the Great Darkness, Aincera could track down the Dragon weapons used by the Dragon Demon generals. Laura was within Azell's party, so they were able to confirm that his party was residing in the Albatan forest. This was all thanks to the Vitan's Chalice.

'Strangely, the precision has been dropping.....'

When Almarick had first shown up, Azell's party had guessed that his ability to track down the Vitan's Chalice wasn't very precise.

It was true. The other Dragon weapons of the Dragon Demon generals could be tracked down in an accurate manner. However, for some strange reason, the accuracy of finding the Vitan's Chalice had always been low.

On top of that, there had been one instance where there had been no response from the Vitan's Chalice. After its disappearance, it had appeared far from the Albatan forest.

"There is a possibility that they might have left Laura behind....."

<Hue hue hue. You've been tucked under like a bear sleeping its winter slumber. You are finally out.>

Reygus didn't care if Almarick was leery or not. He was excited.

Azell's party had entered into the Albatan forest. For the past two months, he had suppressed his desire to charge into the forest. It had been hard for him. If Atein hadn't made a nonaggression pact with Albatan, Reygus would have already charged into the forest. He would have went there by himself if he had to.

Almarick gave Reygus a sideways glance as if he found Reygus to be pathetic.

"Are you just going to ignore all my words?"

<Of course, I'm listening to what you have to say. I'll leave the privilege of worrying about such details to you. You can worry about it to your heart's content. In the past, didn't you complain about the fact that Aunsaurus and Baldazark had the roles of strategists? You have the right to take on their roles now, so you should be thrilled about it.>

"I knew it was going to be like this, but..."

Almarick massaged his forehead. He had changed a lot, but Reygus still remained the same. He was scary in his consistency. It was almost admirable.

“Will you face Azell this time around?”

<I fought him once, and you fought him once. Isn't it my turn now?>

“Hmm. All right. I hope you don't get killed.”

Almarick didn't try to dissuade Reygus. They were colleagues, and both of them were respectful of each other's sense of value.

Reygus' voice was full of anticipation.

<Do you think he's become stronger?>

“He probably is stronger. He might be as strong as his past self.”

<I've seen the recordings. He was really nice.>

“It isn't like you to study up on your opponent.”

<I took a big hit when he wasn't whole. It is the virtue of a man to acknowledge an opponent's power especially when that person took me down a peg.>

Reygus shrugged his shoulder. Almarick asked him a question.

“What's the result from your study? Are you confident you can win against him?”

<Nope.>

“.....”

<In a battle between men, who cares about winning? We just fight.>

“You are incorrigible. If possible, don't get completely destroyed by him. Your revival will take a long time.”

<Hmmm. The fact that I'm guaranteed to be revived makes it sound cheap. I'll willingly put my life on line even if I only have

one.>

Reygus was an immortal. To be precise, Atein was the backbone of the Great Darkness, and if the Great Darkness remains undiminished, Reygus could always be revived. This was true even if his body was completely destroyed. It just took time for him to revive again..

“However, there will be a vacuum until you are revived once again. This will work against us in a critical way. What if the king is killed again, while you were gone? You might never be revived again.”

<Then I won't have to see the disgusting sight of you eating meat.>

“Your ill-nature makes me want to cling to life, so I can show you the sight of me eating some delicious meat.”

Almarick snorted.

Reygus queried.

<So what is our course of action?>

Chapter 182 - The End of the Wait (5)

“Of course, we’ll defeat Azell Karzark and his party.”

<I mean, what is your prediction? How do you think they’ll move?>

“Your brain might have rotted away, but you are still capable of thought. Why don’t you figure it out for yourself?”

<There are others that are better at it than me. Why should I have to do something so tiresome?>

“Tsk tsk.”

Almarick clicked his tongue.

“My staff has given me their opinions. As I’ve said before, they might be trying to deceive us. They might be using Laura as bait to draw us out. Rest of their members might assault the Dragon Demon palace.”

<Oh. You think he is trying to pierce through to the heart of our base?>

“We have too little information to be sure. However, if we send our main force towards him, a trap might be waiting for us.”

<So what should we do?>

“It makes no great difference one way or the other. Let’s attack them, and we can recover the Vitan’s Chalice.”

At his words, Reygus chuckled.

<Good! I love it! It isn’t in my personality to camp out here.>

“You probably would have been delighted to go out there by yourself. That image is vivid in my mind. That is why I decided to take the offensive.”

<You know me too well.>

“Since I’ve gone so far as to take your personality into

consideration in our planning, you better not run out there by yourself.”

<I’ll do that. I also have to be considerate of the ladies.>

Reyqus shrugged his shoulders.

In this operation, only the elites would be put in. In the last battle, they had faced the combined might of Azell’s party and the Guardian Shadows. They had learned their lesson.

Niberis, Kieren and Jeffers would be included in the elite force. Each of them would be leading the elite forces of their respective families, and they would follow the commands of the two Dragon Demon generals.

Suddenly, Reyqus asked him a question.

<What about your heir?>

“He has a pretty good mindset. It’s been worthwhile for me to teach him.”

<You are teaching someone else? Oh-ho. I never expected such a day to come..>

“He is my descendant. I’ll feel annoyed if people say he is worthless.”

When Almarick woke up, the Almarick tribe was completely turned on its head. Since they had falsely set forth Jeffer as their heir, the Almarick tribe stripped Jeffers of all his authority. The true powers within the tribe gave all authority to Almarick.

Jeffers was devastated. The shock had been great when he realized that he had merely been an ignorant puppet.

However, Almarick didn’t discard Jeffers. Jeffers was his descendant, and he had been the heir while he had been missing.

For a while, he got ahold of Jeffers with the aim to train him. If his potential was lacking, he would have given up on him immediately. However, Jeffers hadn’t been too bad, and it had

been fun teaching him.

“I have to devise ways to teach him my techniques. He is worth it. It is a fun exercise.”

<Your words makes me want to raise one too.>

“You shouldn’t do it. I don’t think their bodies can take your ministration.”

9

After Azell’s party entered the Atisan mountain range, it took them five days to arrive at the mountain peak of Laus.

It was thanks to the Guardian Shadows. They guided the party towards terrains that were relatively easy to traverse, and they had eliminated all the threats along the way. If it wasn’t for them, they would have been unable to travel at such high speeds through these unknown lands.

“The mountain peak of Laus.... Now that I’m close to it.... It really is big.”

Azell mumbled to himself as he looked at the mountain peak of Laus from afar.

There were many grand mountain peaks in the Atisan mountain range. The mountain peaks were so high that it was tough to breathe up there.

However, Laus was exceptionally high.

The second highest mountain peak in the Atisan mountain range was only half the size of Laus. On a clear day, one was able to see the mountain peak of Laus from the Albatan forest. This was why this place was known to humans even though no one had tread atop of it.

It was a holy mountain peak that linked the earth to the sky.

Laus was the name of a giant from an old legend. The people of old believed that a god had been punished to hold up the sky. They

believed he was morphed into this very mountain.

“I can’t see the peak now that we are closer to it. How far up do we have to go?”

When they were far away, they were able to see the mountain peak pierce through the clouds. Now that they were close, it was too big to take it all in. Laura spoke.

“It is 17,817 meters.”

“Huh?”

“If we are going by elevation above seal level, it is 17,817 meters high.”

“...how do you know the exact figure?”

He was taken aback, so he asked the question. Laura explained it to him.

“There are several ways to measure it, but this recorded value was left behind by the Dragon Demon king. It has been several hundred years, so the value might differ by several meters.”

“Atein did something so useless. Well, I guess all magicians are like that.....”

Azell was astonished.

‘We have to go up 18 kilometers?’

He was having a hard time wrapping his head around how high the mountain peak was. Laura pointed out another fact.

“The figure was made in reference to the sea level. The mountain peak is probably lower than what you have in mind.”

“.....you are talking about 18 kilometers becoming 17 kilometers. I’m not sure there is much of a difference.”

Laura brought up another point to the grumbling Azell.

“It is a big difference, especially since we have to climb it.”

“Huh?”

“We’ve crossed couple mountain peaks coming here, and we already had a hard time breathing on top of these mountains.”

“You are implying that the mountain peak of Laus might not have an environment capable of supporting humans?”

Laura nodded her head. Azell furrowed his brows.

“It definitely isn’t an altitude one can climb using flight magic. Hmm. I’ve only been that high using my clone, so I’m not sure what the environment is like.....”

Laura was surprised by his words.

“You went up that high of a distance?”

“Me?”

“Yes.”

“I did.”

“How?”

“I summoned the Sky Splitter, and I used the Dance of Shadows to create a clone.”

“Ah.....”

Azell created a clone with substance, and he was able to freely change the magical properties of such a clone. He was able to resonate with the Sky Splitter to take on the property of light. This allowed his clone to be able to climb up to incredible heights.

Azell spoke.

“However, I wasn’t trying to send a clone to a far away distance. I was faced with a slightly different challenge. As the clone climbed higher, it became exponentially hard to maintain the clone. When it reached a certain distance, the clone expired.”

“Still, it is a ridiculous ability.”

“Carlos thought so too. He said my greatest weapon is the ‘ability to be at multiple locations at once.’ I agree with his assessment.”

Azell smirked as he spoke.

“Well, shall we climb? The Guardian Shadows are creating a path for us.”

It was as he said. The Guardian Shadows were lined up in a long line as if they wanted to show them where to go. Several thousand Guardian Shadows stood in an ordered line towards the top of the mountain. They were also being vigilant of their surrounding. It was such an alien sight that it made one feel a bit queasy.

Kairen spoke.

“It seems there are over 3,000 of them now.....”

“I guess so. I thought a lot of them were killed during the last battle, yet there are still so many of them.....”

In the battle where the Keepers of Prophecy were wiped out, the Guardian Shadows had taken a significant blow. From what they had observed, the Guardian Shadows weren’t invincible. They were able to ignore simple physical attacks, and they were more tenacious than any living being. However, they could be killed with attacks infused with magical energy.

Despite this fact, there were over 3,000 Guardian Shadows gathered here. Even if Reygus and Almarick had shown up right now, they wouldn’t have been able to look down on the force gathered here.

Kairen spoke.

“Let’s leave the rest to our friends. Let’s go meet your Archmage friend, and we can hear the final secret from him.”

“Let’s do that.”

The party followed the Guardian Shadows, and they started to climb towards the mountain peak of Laus.

There were no paths that could be traversed by humans, but it didn't matter. Azell and his party members could walk on wall as it was flat ground. Moreover, they also possessed flight magic. They were vigilant against their surrounding, and they left plenty of energy in reserve as they climbed. This meant they were traveling up the mountain at a pace similar to a normal human sprinting across a flat surface.

Still, the destination was far. On top of that, it was getting harder to breathe as they climbed higher.

“We are high enough that.... I'm starting to run out of breath.”

Kairen stopped for a brief moment as he gathered his breath. It was natural to be breathless in the high mountain terrains, but Laus was on a different level.

Above all, the environment itself was too harsh. The temperature was so low that it felt as if their lungs were about to freeze. Then there were the knife-like winds.....

If all of the party members weren't superhuman, they wouldn't have been able to climb this far without powerful magical assistance. It probably would have taken a normal human a week to get up here.

Kairen queried.

“How much do we have left to go?”

<Soon.....>

<There is a door.....>

It was such a simple question that the Guardian Shadows were able to understand his question. They answered him.

It was as they said. It didn't take them too long to reach their destination. However, there was nothing in the direction pointed out by the Guardian Shadows.

“It's a wall?”

Yuren was baffled as he stared at the location pointed out by the Guardian Shadows.

Nothing was there. It was a rock wall. He approached the wall just to be sure, and he touched the wall. He even checked if there was an illusion spell placed over it. He found nothing.

<Prophesied being.....>

<Only he.....>

<His presence is the key.....>

When he heard their words, Azell stepped forward.

“What do I have to do?”

The Guardian Shadows didn’t answer him.

Koo-roo-roong!

Instead, a deafening roar rang out as the wall shook.

The party was surprised, so they got into their battle stance. However, the change that was occuring in front of them was harmless.

The rock wall was changing shape. The sight in front of their eyes became distorted, and a tunnel formed within the darkness.

Laura mumbled her words in surprise.

“Path of Tears?”

It was the same as the passageway created by the Vitan’s Chalice where she distorted space. This technique was capable of creating a path even when there was a physical barrier. Azell stared into the darkness as he took a deep breath.

When Leticia saw this, she asked him a question.

“Are you scared?”

“Aren’t you supposed to ask if I’m nervous?”

“It’s the same thing.”

“It’s different.”

Azell burst out laughing as he took a step into the darkness.

At the same time, his surrounding changed.

‘It is a dimensional distortion field.’

When Azell entered the path, the tunnel morphed into a dimensional distortion field. He was being dragged towards a new place. It was like using the Vitan’s Maze to travel a long distance in an instant.

Azell remained calm.

“As expected.....”

He had never been to this place. However, he had seen this place once before.

It wasn't in reality. He saw it in a dream.

The light reflected off the surface of the water, and the light danced on the wall. Normally, an underground space like this shouldn’t have a single light source, yet the magical light created such a mystical sight.

<You’ve finally reached this point, Azell.>

He knew this voice better than anyone, yet the voice sounded so foreign. The voice spoke towards Azell.

It was a very bleak voice. It was as if the deepest darkness below had been squeeze to create this voice.. If felt as if his lifespan was shortened by listening to the voice. The voice sounded similar to the voice of an Undead, yet the voice elicited a more basic fear from a living being.

“I’ve heard those words before..”

Azell felt lost as to what he should feel. He looked towards the owner of the voice.

Water was gathered at the corner of this space. There were

fragments of light dancing above the water as if they were fireflies dancing in the summer night. The light was so faint that it looked as if the darkness was about to swallow them at any moment. However, the light continued to fragment, and the beautiful halo of light continued to exist.

In the middle of all of this, a silhouette wrapped up in darkness existed.

Fragments of light was dancing around him, yet his face couldn't be seen. It wasn't, because of the darkness casted by the worn out hood. It was probably caused by the ominous energy surrounding his body.

His body was wrapped in a ragged robe, and something was planted deep in his chest. The end was rounded, and it was embedded with a clear gem. The wooden staff was pierced through his chest as a quiet darkness emanated from it.

There was a rectangular pillar made out of silver erected behind him. Black chains were tying him to the silver pillar, and darkness crawled up the surface of the pillar in the shape of letters. It was a bizarre sight.

Azell Called out to him.

"It has been awhile, Carlos."

<Yes. It really has been awhile, Azell.>

The two sworn friends had ended the Dragon Demon war, and their reunion occurred after 220 years had passed.

Chapter 183 - Two Persons (1)

1

The rippling waves of light turned hazy within the darkness, and the silence continued.

Two people...no, one person and a being that used to be a human silently stared at each other. There were only 20 steps between the two of them. However, there was 220 years piled atop of them.

They looked at each other, and mixed emotions were exchanged between them. He couldn't see Carlos' face, but Azell was confident they were feeling the same emotions.

There was a maelstrom of words within his chest that he wanted to blurt out. However, when it came time to speak, he had no idea what he should say first.

“You.....”

In the end, Azell opened his mouth first.

“I heard you became bald.”

<Is that all you have to say after meeting me after 200 years?>

Carlos was dumbfounded as he laughed. Azell smirked.

“Your thought construct reacted a bit differently. He became angry.”

<It has been a long time since I created it. I'm not angry at hearing such words. Actually, I welcome it.>

“You welcome it?”

<Yes. It is proof that there is someone that is willing to talk to me as if I'm human. Moreover... That person happens to be you, Azell.>

“.....”

<It has been very long since I've had a proper conversation with a

human. It has been over a hundred years.>

When he spoke those words, one could hear a deep loneliness in his voice. There was a bizarre ring to his voice, but there was also his emotions mixed within it. It made Azell's heart ache to hear it.

Azell took a step closer as he asked a question.

“Did you purposely isolate me from my party?”

<Yes, I've been observing you, and I know you have good companions. However, I don't want us to be interrupted during this time.>

“I see.....”

A good amount of time had passed, but Azell was the only one that had arrived at this place. There had been no news from his party members. This wouldn't have happened unless this was Carlos' intention.

Azell queried him.

“The Guardian Shadows acted as your eyes and ears.”

<You are still quick on the uptake.>

“I also know that they are your eyes and ears, but they cannot be your mouth. You would have conveyed your intentions at a much earlier date if you were capable of doing it.”

<That's right. Unfortunately, I had to go through these inconveniences to protect my secrets. I cannot unilaterally use methods that is only convenient for me.>

“The more you act in pursuit of your own convenience, it'll allow your opponent to use it against you. You always used to say that.”

<When you went to sleep, I always told my students that phrase. I taught that about the concept of security.>

“I'm guessing a lot had occurred even after I went to sleep?”

<Even if I churn out a page of record per day, I won't be able to finish it in 20 years. That is how much incidents had occurred after you went to sleep.>

“I don't like long-winded stories. You should summarized it, and just tell me the fun parts.”

<The fact that I can hear such shameless statements makes me really realize that I am meeting my friend Azell.>

“I don't know if you changed in your old age or not, but I just know that you went bald.”

<I was sad, but that's old news. My body is in a state where it doesn't matter if I have hair or not.>

“.....”

<Mmm? You don't like my joke?>

“...truthfully, I don't. Let's discuss that at a later time. Let's talk about the fun stuff first.”

<I would like you to go first.>

“Huh?”

<You are here in reality. Your voice is the same as the one I remember.... You probably don't realize how deeply moved I am right now, Azell.>

“.....”

<I want you to tell me what has gone on after you woke up. I want you to tell me what the Guardian Shadows were unable to report.....>

“Shall I?”

<It doesn't seem right for you to be standing, while you are telling your story. You should have a seat over there.>

Azell followed his words. There was a suitable stone next to him, so Azell sat on it.

“I guess I don’t have to worry about where to start my story.....”

Azell started his story from the time he woke up within the Balan forest. He spoke about what he experienced when he was found by the Western Border Guards of the Rulain Kingdom. He spoke about the Dragon Demon princess Arrieta, and the encounter he had with Carlos’ thought construct, who had gotten angry at Azell for making fun of his baldness.

His story was long.

Was it really ok for them to speak in such laid back manner in such a situation? The question arose inside his mind, but he ignored it. At that moment, he wanted to forget all other problems.

Carlos listened to Azell’s story, and he had fun chiming in with his own words.

<You’ve experienced much in a short amount of time. It seems you are not destined to live a quiet life.>

“Unfortunately, you are right.”

<After you went to sleep, I met those that lived turbulent lives. Some of them helped me save the world.>

“I’ve read the recorded history books, yet I never read about such events. They did list your many achievements, but.....”

<These events didn’t come to the forefront of history. I took care of it before they could surface.>

“I see.....”

Carlos’ current state might have had something to do with those incidents.

When Azell became silent, Carlos asked a question.

<Do you have something specific you want to ask me?>

“Hmm. Let’s see.... How did Rogan lose his business?”

<Oh. That really was an unfortunate situation. Thanks to that incident, I lost the money I invested in his business.>

“You invested in his business?”

<I did. It was when Rogan had a money flow problem. In truth, I wanted to help him more, but he turned me down.>

“I see.”

Rogan had made many friends in the Dragon Demon war, and these friends had helped Rogan, when he was in a tough spot. Carlos was one of those friends. Of course, he helped out.

Carlos spoke in a playful manner.

<Should I tell you another story?>

“What kind of story?”

<After you went to sleep, do you know that countless women came to the County of Karzark claiming to have born your child? The County of Karzark suffered a lot because of it.>

“Oohk.....”

It looked as if Carlos had hit a sore spot. It was to be expected, since he had heard about the problem from the Keepers of Prophecy, who were his descendents. Even if he had ten mouths, Azell couldn't say anything about the problem.

“C...can we not talk about that?”

<That isn't possible. I want to tell you the exact details, and I believe it is your duty to hear it out.>

“Shit. I'm all ears..”

<I feel a grim resolve from you. It is akin to when you went into battle with your life on the line. I'll gladly tell you all about it, my friend.>

Carlos seemed very delighted as he spoke about stories that had piled up within him.

While Azell met Carlos, his party was guided towards a different space.

A Guardian Shadow appeared in front of the flustered party, and it spoke to them.

<Hello everyone. I am Carlos Rizester. I know who all of you are. I've watched all of you through the Guardian Shadows.>

“What about Azell?”

Laura was facing the legendary Archmage, but surprisingly, she asked about Azell first. Carlos laughed as he answered her. He seemed amused.

<He is with me. It has truly been a long time since I've met my friend. Will you not all two friend to catch up for a short time?>

Of course, the party had no grounds to refuse his request. They had no choice, but to wait until Azell finished talking with Carlos.

“Still, it is a reunion after 220 years. If they are planning to catch up with each other, 4 days and 4 nights won't be enough. Are they going to leave us here for that long?”

Leticia grumbled.

They were in a communal space with magic surrounding them. Faint magic lights floated through the air like fireflies. It lit the surrounding very dimly. The light only reached the vicinity of the party members. There was only complete darkness a short distance away..

Yuren looked at the darkness as he furrowed his brows.

“I've seen this darkness before.....”

“Darkness is darkness. How can a darkness look familiar to you?”

Leticia rebuked him.

However, she was feeling a similar sentiment as him at that

moment. The darkness filling this place was infused with remarkable amount of power.

Laura spoke.

“I know what it is.”

“What?”

“This is the Great Darkness.”

Everyone startled in surprise.

The only one amongst them that had seen the heart of the Great Darkness was Laura. This was why her words held weight here.

Yuren queried her.

“It doesn’t look entirely similar, right?”

“I’m not sure. It does feel slightly different, but I cannot put my finger on it.....”

Laura narrowed her eyes as she observed the darkness with her magic. She started using all types of magic to see through to the true nature of the darkness.

‘I’m lost.’

However, she couldn’t see through it. The magical construct was too complex. She could only observe its surface. It was impossible for her to see through to its inner side.

Laura wasn’t familiar with such an experience. She wasn’t as good in battle, but she was one of the top magicians of this generation. The only time she found herself lacking was when she looked at the artifacts left behind by Atein.

‘The Archmage Carlos was a figure of this caliber? But.....’

One could just look at the records inside the Plain of Darkness to know how great Carlos was. He was like Azell. His abilities transcended the limits of humans.

However, she was having a hard time accepting this fact.

The magic within the Plain of Darkness had advanced much further compared to the days of the Dragon Demon war.

Atein, Aunsaurus and Baldazark had been transcendent beings, but they were exception to the rule. If one looked at the overall approach to magic and research, their descendants had advances past that era. For example, Azell had become surprised when she was able to disguise her Dragon Demon magic as regular magical energy.

‘Still, it had only been 200 years, yet he was able to recreate the Great Darkness by himself?’

Carlos had gained powers that rivalled the Dragon Demon generals in his 20s. It wasn’t ‘just’ 200 years. It might have been possible if it was him.

Still, a combat oriented magician weren’t comparable with other types of magicians. The Great Darkness wasn’t something that could be created just because one was outstanding in battle.

If Aunsaurus’ handwritten accounts were true, Atein was the only one that had been able to understand the true nature of the Great Darkness.

Those that were connected by the Great Darkness could transcend the limitations placed by distance. It was possible to speak in real time through the Great Darkness. This special property allowed one to gather an enormous amount of information.

Atein had created greater artifacts using the Great Darkness as basis. For example, he was able to create results like the Road of Darkness. He was able to achieve ridiculous results like being able to cause simultaneous magical effects several dozen kilometers away.

The Great Darkness encompassed the whole continent, but there was no burden in maintaining it. There were no magic circles

needed, and no facilities were made. In fact, magical energy wasn't needed to maintain the Great Darkness.

This wasn't just something that transcended the common sense of magic. It defied logic of this world. Basically, he had creating something out of nothing.

‘I wonder what kind of person he is.’

She was really curious. She hadn't been this curious since she had met Azell.

Suddenly, the party felt a chill.

Sss-oooooooooh.....

“Who are you?”

Chapter 184 - Two Persons (2)

“Who are you?”

Kairen’s hand moved towards his sword sheath as he asked the question.

There was something there beyond the darkness. It wasn’t a Guardian Shadow. It was some being with a powerful presence.

<I’m not your enemy.>

An Undead made its appearance as it spoke those words. At a glance, this being didn’t look like an Undead.

It was a being wearing a worn out black robe. However, there was nothing within. The robe was filled with darkness.

‘It is akin to a Guardian Shadow, but it is an Undead. What should we do?’

If it wasn’t an evil spirit, a part of a corpse had to be used as the core to make an Undead. Normally, there should be bones that would be visible.....

<This happens once an Undead exists for a very long time. Even if the bones are protected by magic, they aren’t eternal. Please don’t ask how long I’ve been like this. I do not remember.>

The Undead spoke as if he could read what the others were thinking about him.

Kairen queried him.

“May you reveal who you are?”

<I am his messenger.>

“Archmage Carlos’ messenger?”

<I believe he went by that name before.>

‘What about now?’

There was a strange nuance hidden within his words. However, the Undead didn't give the party time to question him any further. He continued to speak.

<He said it would be rude to make guests wait indefinitely, so he wanted me to deliver what he had prepared for all of you..>

“He prepared something?”

<He prepared items that might be of great strength to you. He has observed you all for a long time. This is why he had prepared tools that will be useful to you.>

“Ho-oh.”

Kairen's eyes shone. The Archmage had created the Guardian Shadows. Of course, Kairen was interested in the tools prepared by him.

This was especially true, since he had lost one of his two Dragon Swords in the battle with Almarick. When he resided within the Albatan Forest, the smith offered to replace his sword as a gift, but he had found the new sword lacking.

The Undead turned around as he spoke.

<Please follow me. I will guide you to his armory.>

3

The conversation between Azell and Carlos was never ending.

They talked about memories from the Dragon Demon war, and the events that had occurred during Azell's sleep. Then they talked about events after Carlos receded from the surface of history.....

There were plenty of topics to talk about. Even if they talked for four days and four nights, they wouldn't have run out of topics to talk about.

“It is unfortunate that we don't have any alcohol here.”

<I didn't have the means to acquire any alcohol. Still, that is the

world's most precious water.>

Carlos shrugged his shoulders.

Azell held a cup made out of ice, and light was sloshing within it. It was groundwater from within the mountain peak of Laus. As expected of the sacred mountain peak, the water contained enormous amount of energy. Carlos had refined it with magic, and Azell was drinking that water.

<I don't really remember what alcohol tastes like. It is the same with food. It's so faint that I have to ruminate over it through my memories. I think about it until the memories run out.....>

It was a miserable story.

However, it was something that happened naturally for an Undead. An Undead could not experience what it enjoyed as a human. Basically, an Undead couldn't enjoy the fruits of being alive. It was the biggest reason why Undeads lost their minds over time.

Azell could tell that Carlos was a special existence when compared to the other Undeads. However, this didn't change the fact that he wasn't alive.

'No, even if he was alive.....'

Memories became altered, and it wore down through the flow of time. Carlos had been trapped in this dark space for over 100 years, so it was inevitable that his past memories eroded away.

Azell briefly looked at Carlos, and he brought up a topic he had been putting off.

"I have a lot I want to ask you."

<You want to know about events that occurred after I died?>

"Yes."

<Hoo hoo. Where should I start the story from.....>

Carlos hesitated. When he raised his arm, the black chains binding his body clanked.

<Hmmm. The problems that occurred during that time was so numerous that I'm having a hard time talking about it. In truth, I want to put off talking about it. If possible, I never want to talk about it.....>

"If that is what you want, I'm fine with it."

<Those from the Plain of Darkness might come here at any moment, yet you are ok with it?>

Azell had already been worrying about that possibility. However, he spoke in a firm manner.

"I don't care if they come or not."

<...ha ha ha. You haven't changed at all, Azell.>

Carlos let out a cheerful laughter. There was such a bleakness in his voice, but Azell was able to find the voice of Carlos within it.

<If I was alive.... If blood pumped through my heart, I would have shed tears. That's right. I would have immediately rushed out from this place with you, and.....>

"If you want to do it, you should do it. What's the big deal about you being dead? I doesn't matter if you are alive or dead. That isn't the important part."

<I'm already dead, Azell. I was removed from the surface of the world, and the only thing I can do is to prepare for the future in the dark and damp darkness.>

"In historical terms, I'm in the same boat. The era I lived in died the moment I was put to sleep."

<That's.....>

"You are Carlos. It doesn't matter what you look like right now. You are Carlos Rizester, who put your life on the line with me. We fought the Dragon Demon king's army. Who cares if your heart

doesn't pump any blood?"

Azell didn't hesitate as he spoke. A part of his mind thanked Leticia.

He had listened to her advice, and he had resolved the indecision within his heart. If he hadn't done so, he wouldn't have been able to express his feelings clearly. If he had been indecisive, he might have hurt Carlos.

<Hoo. Yes. In truth, you don't have to worry about the problem I just spoke about.>

"You mean those bastards from the Plain of Darkness?"

<Yes, they won't be able to find this place. It has always been that way.....>

"I see."

Azell didn't ask how this was possible. If Carlos said it, it was based on him having sufficient evidence to make that statement.

<Azell.>

Carlos' voice was infused with emotions that he couldn't voice.

<I'm sorry.>

"About what?"

<I wanted to apologize to you if we ever met again. I want to apologize for not being able to protect the County of Karzark.>

"You don't have to apologize for that. You did all you could."

<How can you be so sure?>

"If it's my friend Carlos, I'm sure he would have done exactly that."

<.....>

Carlos' shoulder shook. Only darkness existed where his face should be, but he laughed as he covered his face. It was as if he was

sobbing from the grief he felt, but at the same time, one could also feel his joy. It was a confusing laughter.

Carlos laughed for a long time before he spoke.

<If we met when I was alive, we would be having a slightly different conversation.>

“You probably would have gotten angry when I mentioned your baldness.”

<Maybe. No, I’m sure I would have been angry. Maybe, there would have been a distance between us, because I would have spoken to you like an old man. In the latter years of my life, I pretended to be a respectable Archmage.>

“You aren’t acting that way right now.”

<Is that so? Jeez. I tried by hardest to live, so I could someday treat you as if you are a brat. However, when my body became like this, such thoughts started to fade away. Instead....>

For a brief moment, Carlos thought about the right expression he wanted to say.

<From the moment I met you, I feel like my old self. It is as we’ve gone back to the old days.>

“I see.”

Azell snickered. It was true that Carlos’ attitude towards him hadn’t changed much.

“I’ve already had a similar conversation in the past.”

Azell told him about the conversation he had in the past with the Carlos’ thought construct, who had been old. Carlos started to snicker.

<I’m glad I left behind my thought construct. It relayed words that I cannot convey to you right now.>

“I’ve received many benefits from your forethought. No, I

wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you."

If Carlos hadn't found a way, he wouldn't have been able to win out against Atein's curse. From the moment he had woken up, he had benefited from all the measures taken by Carlos. He wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Carlos' planning.

The friendship between the two of them had transcended a timespan of 220 years.

"That is why it is my turn to help you. I'll help you in any way I can."

<Just one.....>

Carlos spoke.

<I have one request I want to ask of you.>

"Are you planning on asking me to end Atein's ambitions? If so, you don't even have to ask it of me."

<Of course not. The tasks we couldn't finish in our era.... Yes, it is our duty. We have to settle it.>

"Is that why you sacrificed yourself? You let yourself become what you are for that reason?"

<It isn't as if I did this, because I wanted to do it.>

"I know. You probably did it, because you had no choice."

<.....>

"What is your request? I'll grant whatever request you have."

<You promise?>

"Of course."

When Azell nodded his head, Carlos spoke.

<Let's talk about that later. Before I can tell you my request, you have to know some other facts first. If you have something you want to hear first, ask me it.>

Azell furrowed his brows at Carlos' words. However, he followed Carlos' suggestion instead of questioning him.

"I heard it from Albatan. As compensation, you traded Atein's curse to him. He spoke as if something meaningful had happened. What was it?"

<That old Dragon should have told you everything if he went so far as to tell you that. He always does such annoying.....>

"I know right. He is a Dragon yet he acts like a naughty old man."

The feelings the two of them felt for Albatan was completely synched, so they sniggered.

Soon, Carlos confessed to something Azell could have never imagined.

<Azell. In truth, I failed in the attempt in saving you.>

"What?"

<The disappearance of the curse inflicted on you had nothing to do with the sleep of the Dragons. There is a really important story I have to tell you.>

4

Carlos had suggested the sleep of the Dragons in attempt to save Azell from Atein's curse.

The Dragon and Dragon Majins displayed a surprising amount of life force during their hibernation. In exchange for entering a period of no activity, a wound that could have killed a Dragon or a Dragon Majin could be healed over a long period of time. However, one was completely defenseless in this state.

It was unlike the hibernation of other animals. There was proof that magic was active during this sleep.

Carlos took notice of this characteristic. Since Azell possessed Dragon Demon magic that exceeded most Dragon Demons, he hypothesized that Azell would be able to overcome the curse

through the sleep of the Dragons.

<I was too naive. At the time, I didn't even know what Atein's curse was, and I failed in identifying the true nature of this curse. I merely allowed you to maximize your strength. It allowed you to resist against the curse, but I couldn't find another way to defeat the curse at the time.>

“However, I woke up from the 200 year sleep, and I recovered from the curse..”

<The curse didn't disappear, because you recovered from it. I found this out later, but the curse wasn't something that could be overcome with just power. It was obvious if I look back on it. Atein was the founder of magic, and he reached the zenith in the art of magic. A being of that caliber had used this curse in the moment of his death. It was Atein's final technique.>

“So why did the curse disappear?”

<I eliminated it.>

“What?”

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<I'm the one that eliminated your curse. Despite this fact, there are two reasons why you slept for a long time.> First, Carlos eliminated the curse after Azell fell asleep for over 100 years. Until that moment, Azell had been using his hibernation to resist against the curse, and he had been persistent in hanging onto his life.

Secondly, the damage he had taken from the curse had put him close to death. It took a long time for Azell to recover from it.

“I woke up with my Rings of Life missing not because of the long sleep.....”

<The curse ate away at it. If it wasn't for your Rings of Life, you would have died before I was able to circumvent the curse.> “So that's how it was.....”

Azell was astonished. He knew something had gone awry, but he hadn't expected this.

“What was the true identity of the curse?”

Albatan had revealed that Atein's curse hadn't been placed there only to kill Azell. Albatan had revealed that there was some profound intent behind the curse.

Carlos spoke.

<Dragon Demon General.>

“What are you saying?”

<Atein planned on making you the new Dragon Demon general, Azell.> “What?”

Azell couldn't hide the shock he was feeling.

What nonsense was he saying?

However, Carlos was serious.

<Let's look at our current situation. All the Dragon weapons of

the Dragon Demon generals had been preserved. Reygus' corpse had been destroyed, yet he was brought back as a special breed of Undead. How was he revived as this special Undead? Moreover, Almarick was able to come fully back to life, because his corpse had been recovered. How was this all possible?> “What’s worse is that Atein is trying to revive himself too. Laura surmised that this was all possible thanks to the Great Darkness.....”

<That i s correct. They stored their essence within the Great Darkness, and this allows them to be revived.> “What is the Great Darkness? How can it bring about such miracles?”

<If I try to explain it in a concise manner..... Hmmm. Yes. Let us say there are beings that had gained transcendent power. It is the graveyard for those that had reached for immortality.> “A graveyard?”

<There were beings that couldn't die, and those that were dead that still wanted to live forever. It's a graveyard that promised eternal sleep for these beings.> “...you are explaining in a prose that magicians love to use. I have no idea what you are trying to say.”

<Ha ha ha. If I start getting into the specifics, the explanation will become endless. However, I'll tell you about a figure you have to know. There was a being named Belrun from a long time ago.> “What did he do?”

<He was called the King of Death. He was the original black magician.> “That’s a very grandiose title. I don’t think I’ve heard about him before.....”

<He was a figure buried in legends. However, he once pushed the world to the brink of its demise. He was the first amongst the numerous creatures of this world to defy death. He became an Undead. He also used his experience of becoming an Undead to create summoning techniques that taunted death.> It was the same story told by Reygus to Chanes.

‘A living being feels pain, because one is alive. That is why I will make everyone into an Undead. Everyone will transcend the cycle of life and death. This will free everyone from the the pain caused by the four phases of life!’

Belrun was a madman that had tried to bring his ambition into reality.

The problem was the fact that Belrun had the enough power to bring his ambition into fruition. He was the first to defy death, and he shook the foundation of the world by causing all kinds of disasters. He caused countless deaths.

<In the end, he was defeated at the hands of Atein, Almarick and Reygus.> “So they were once heroes, who saved the world.”

<That isn’t the entire story, but it is part of it.>

However, even Atein was unable to kill Belrun. Belrun had transcended death, and it was more apt to say that he was a god-like figure.

<Atein put Belrun in a sleep that he couldn’t wake up from. Then Atein sealed him. The method he used to bring about this result was the Great Darkness.> Belrun wasn’t the only one trapped within the Great Darkness. He wasn’t the first nor would he be the last.

There were beings that the world couldn’t handle. These transcendent beings threatened the balance of the world through their madness. Atein methodically defeated these beings, and he had sealed them within the Great Darkness.

It was odd. These were beings that transcended the mysteries of the world. They had become immortals, and every single one of them had gone mad.

They couldn’t accept the world that was in front of them, so they tried to change the world into their image. Every time such an event occurred, Atein and his comrades fought to defend the

world.

<...moreover, the power of the sealed beings became the basis for creating the Great Darkness. This is my guess, but Atein probably hadn't expected such a result to occur. Atein had realized that it was impossible to indefinitely seal the power of these near immortal beings. This was why he further developed the Great Darkness.> These were beings that could not perish. How could one seal beings that continuously regenerated?

It was impossible.

Atein put them to sleep, and he created a method where their power was being continuously consumed.

Atein used the power generated by these beings as pillar to a feedback structure that encompassed the world. It was a system that continuously sealed them using their own power, and it continuously inflicted loss on their power.

The Great Darkness possessed immense possibility, and when the power of these beings mixed with the Great Darkness, the Great Darkness started to change.

<The Great Darkness was something that transcended magic. Atein had created it, but it had become part of the world. This caused a huge wound to be formed on this world.> “So they were able to use the power of Belrun to revive themselves?”

<It is part of the reason. The power to make the Undead allowed him to make the special Undead. However, that power couldn't wholly bring someone back to life. Reygus was a result that was achieved using Belrun's power.> “Hmm. It seems we've strayed off topic.... What about the part where he was trying to make me a Dragon General?”

<I need to tell you this story. If not, you won't be able to understand the conclusion. Atein targeted you with the curse, because he wanted to make you part of the Great Darkness.>

“Mmm?”

<It means you would have been a subordinate to the Great Darkness like Almarick and Reygus.> “That.....”

Azell stopped breathing for a moment.

If he had died by Atein’s curse, would he have been reborn in this era like Almarick?

<Yes, you would have become the new Dragon Demon general. You would have had to obey Atein.> “.....”

Azell became chilled with fright. He never expected such a plot from Atein.

His attempt failed. I was barely able to find out the true nature of the curse, and I was able to eliminate it.> “By this time, you’ve been asleep for well over 100 years.....”

Azell felt an ominous feeling as he queried Carlos.

“Were you in this state? Or were you still your former self?”

<No.>

“So how were you able to accomplish it?”

Carlos couldn’t exit this place. It had been the same at the time.

The Guardian Shadows were created at a later date. Basically, he didn’t have any subordinates that could have helped him take care of his business. That was what Azell surmised.

<As expected, you are quite sharp. I.....>

Carlos spoke with a bitterness in his voice.

<I became part of the Great Darkness.>

5

While Azell and Carlos were conversing, the other party members were walking down a tunnel created within the mountain peak of Laus. They felt a chill. Kairen spoke using the

Whispering technique.

-It is creepy here. Is everyone an Undead here?

There were countless stone cases, clothes and armor filled with darkness lining the tunnel. It seemed they were all vessels containing an Undead.

Yuren spoke.

-I guess so. They are all very powerful Undead. They feel similar to the Guardian Shadows.....

They felt similar to the 'Sleepless Guardians', who had accompanied the Keepers of the Prophecy. They felt distinct from the normal Undead, and they seemed to possess more power.

Kairen posed a question.

-Why won't they mobilize them onto the field? With this amount of troops, the ongoing fight would be resolved much easier.....

The Sleepless Guardians were powerful beings. However, they had possessed a limitation. They had been tied to the Keepers of Prophecy. However, if there were more beings like them, they would be able to further restrict the activities of the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

'It is an unsatisfying situation.'

The party reached their destination. There was a space along the tunnel that had been widened, and the items for the party had been readied there.

The Undead spoke.

<Please look on top of the stone altar engraved with your name.>
It was as he said. The space contained wide stone pillars that had the name of Kairen, Laura, Leticia and Yuren engraved on it. On top of these altars, there were items that were infused with powerful magic.

"It seems they really prepared items that are tailored to each of

us.”

Kairen expressed his amazement. There was a sword that looked similar to his Dragon Sword, and there was a set of armor that looked similar to the one he wore in the past. These items didn't contain any Dragon Demon magic, but one could tell that they were powerful magical weapons. Leticia received a new spear and armor. Laura received a magic tome that contained Carlos' knowledge, and a coat that was infused with magic. They also received accessories that were complementary to the gears they received.

“Why do I only get this?”

Yuren sounded as if he was about to cry. It was to be expected.....

“You only received that?”

Kairen was taken aback.

Yuren was given an iron box that was the size of his fist. Yuren furrowed his brows.

“Wow. Since he is my ancestor, my hopes were high. How can this be?”

“It seems you just look like him. You might not be his descendant....”

“That's not possible. You heard what Azell and Almarick said, right?”

Yuren grumbled as he looked over the box. It didn't look special, but a change occurred when he inserted his magical energy into the box.

-To my descendant Yuren Rizester.

When he inserted his magical energy, he heard the voice of Carlos within his head.

-This is the Box of Hope.

‘Box of Hope?’

-If you open this box, you will be greeted by an irrevocable destruction.

The name and the description didn’t match up.

-I promise you this. In return, you will be able to overcome any danger using this.

‘It is used for suicide bombing.’

Yuren grumbled. Basically, he would have to sacrifice his life to obtain enormous power.

However, the explanation hadn’t ended yet.

-Then you will find out the truth.

‘Truth?’

-This is a truth you must know. The miracle is the price for this truth. The choice is up to you, my descendant.

Carlos’ explanation ended there. However, Yuren dumbfoundedly stared at the box for a long time.

‘Truth? What truth is he talking about? Is he perhaps talking about the identity of the Guide?’

He had a lot of guesses, but he was leery at the fact that he couldn’t pinpoint what Carlos was talking about. Yuren furrowed his brows.

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6

A silence descended between the two of them.

“.....”

Azell’s face hardened for a brief moment, but he patiently waited for Carlos to continue his story.

Carlos read trust from Azell’s demeanor. No matter what, Azell’s trust in him didn’t waver. Even if they were to become adversaries, Azell would assume he had a good reason for his actions. Azell had absolute trust in him.

‘Ah ah.....’

The fact that he could enjoy the confidence of someone was moving.

He had made the right choices. He had pursued this even at the expense of his body, and he hadn’t been wrong.

Carlos regretted the fact that he could no longer shed tears.

It had been a long time for him.

The time exceeded the lifespan of a human. He armored himself with a firm conviction as he fought for the future.

However, even if one possessed a strong conviction, humans were endlessly wavering creatures.

Even a object from nature like the boulder became weathered over time. Humans were continuously changing creatures. How hard would it have been for a human to remain unchanging?

It was the same for Carlos.

Carlos hadn’t had anyone to support him through the fight he waged on his own. He felt endless regret, doubt and despair.

<Azell.>

Carlos regretted the fact that he could no longer put on a bright smile.

<The fact that I was able to meet you again.... I've been compensated for the pain I've felt up until now.>

He had hope.

Even if his soul wore down from the despair, he felt....

He believed there would come a day when someone would tell him that he had been right.

However, those words couldn't come from just anyone.

It had to be spoken by one person, and he had used every method in his arsenal to give this person a life and a future. Carlos had waited for him. He wanted the reliable and strong person from his memories to show up one day. He had wanted to see this person laugh again.

He had persevered in the darkness of despair, and at this moment, he had received his reward.

Azell smirked.

“Stop talking nonsense. It is the same problem now as in the old times. You pretend as if something is of great import to test the reaction of others. We've already exhausted every test we can pose each other.”

<It has been over 200 years, but it seems old habits die hard.>

Carlos cheerfully gave an explanation.

<As you probably know, I created the Guardian Shadows. However, it wasn't created solely through my power.>

The Guardian Shadows were an amazing piece of magic. However, it was something that transcended magic.

It used every person on this world as a surveillance net for the Dragon Demon king worshippers. Moreover, the Guardian

Shadows were made up of members that died with an eternal enmity against the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

<At its foundation, the structure of the Guardian Shadows is similar to the Great Darkness. It's because I made them using the Great Darkness..>

The Great Darkness used transcendent beings like Belrun as 'pillars'.

However, they weren't the only ones that were present within the Great Darkness. There were other doomed souls that wished for eternal life. There was a large cluster of souls that made up the Great Darkness.

<Amongst these souls, some are able to manifest in this world as supernatural beings. Reygus and Almarick is an example.>

Their essence remained within the Great Darkness. That was why they were revived every time they were killed.

If the body remains intact, they were revived back to their living state. If the body was destroyed, they were brought back as an Undead.

<The power of Belrun is the main engine that powers the revival. Aside from this ability, the power of many other beings were added to Atein's technique. I became part of the Great Darkness, and I stole part of his power. I was able to create a technique that was independent from Atein.>

It was similar to Great Darkness within the Plain of Darkness. Both Aincera and Almarick had access to the Great Darkness.

Carlos had gone through a different process, so he wasn't beholden to Atein. He was able to create the Guardian Shadows.

<Aside from the Keepers of Prophecy, the Guardian Shadows are immortals. They can't be easily killed, and even if one is able to kill them, they are revived after time passes.>

“Is that why their numbers continue to grow even after fighting the Demon King worshippers over the years?”

<Yes. For example, there are over 3,000 Guardian Shadows gathered outside of this mountain. There are many more Guardian Shadows that are spread across the continent, and they are thwarting the plans of the Dragon Demon king worshippers. >

“If there are 3,000, that is almost the amount that assembled last time. Are you saying you can bring more of them here?”

<It means that there are that many beings, who hold a grudge against the Demon King worshippers. I’ve gathered such numbers even though I started the Guardian Shadow technique less than a hundred years ago.>

Carlos let out a bleak laughter. The number of Guardian Shadows was directly correlated to the number of wicked deeds carried out by the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

<Why do you think the Keepers of the Prophecy weren’t immortals like the Guardian Shadows?>

“It’s because you wanted to deliver the Dragon weapons and Dragon Demon magic to me. Why did you use that particular method?”

Azell had given all his Dragon weapons to Carlos before he went to sleep. Why had he chosen to use the Keepers of the Prophecy to bring the weapons into this era?

<They were needed. I was able to preserve the Sky Splitter by connecting it to you. I couldn’t do that with the other Dragon weapons.>

“Why didn’t you give it to others.....”

<It was my selfishness. I wanted to give it all back to you when you returned. If you look at the result, I think I made the right choice.>

He was right. If Carlos had given Azell's Dragon weapons to other people, the Dragon Demon king worshippers would have made sure to destroy them.

<Also, it isn't as if I tried to preserve all of them. I passed on two Dragon weapons.>

He had given one to Azell's adopted child, who took over the County of Karzark after Azell. The other one was given to the country's most promising hero.

However, they weren't able to pass on their weapon.

<Then there's the one..... I blew it.>

"What?"

<I'll tell you about it a little bit later.>

Azell was taken aback, but Carlos waved his hand to calm him.

Carlos' explanation left much to be desired. However, Azell had seen the exception to what he was describing.

"Weren't the Dragon weapons of the Dragon Demon generals preserved in the Great Darkness?"

<I tried to do the same thing. However, I wasn't able to perfect it like Atein. I couldn't find a solution that dealt with the wear and tear that accumulated over time. In the end, I needed living vessels, so I created the Keepers of Prophecy out of need.>

"I see....."

<I am part of the Great Darkness, but that doesn't mean I'm capable of doing everything Atein is capable of doing. The other side can't create the Guardian Shadows like me. I'm able to copy certain things created by Atein, but there are also things I cannot copy. Did you see Reygus? He's only an Undead, yet he was able to use his Dragon weapon. On top of that, he's able to temporarily use his Dragon Demon magic.>

"Ah. That was jaw dropping."

<It is possible, because Reygus and the Soul Hammer resides within the Great Darkness. I decided to impart the Dragon weapons and Dragon Demon magic to the Keepers of Prophecy, and I kept them from aging.>

“It seems I owe a lot to my descendants.”

Azell let out a bitter laughter.

It didn't matter what an amazing feat of magic the Keepers of Prophecy were. He could only express his respects towards the Keepers of Prophecy, and he would continue their will.

Carlos looked into the empty air as he spoke.

<I did them wrong, but there was no other choice. There was no choice left for them and me.....>

“I didn't say those words, because I blame you.”

<I know.>

Carlos sneered at himself as he continued to speak.

<I was able to take over part of the Great Darkness, and it was the foothold needed for me to create the Guardian Shadows. Instead of giving the Keepers of Prophecy immortality, I imbued them with special powers.>

Alpha was able to suppress Undead power using his gaze. This was possible, because he had imbued part of Belrun's power to Alpha.

Omega was able to peek into the Great Darkness that was under the control of Aincera. This was possible, because their essence were within the Great Darkness.

<...if Atein was alive, this would have been impossible. He would have recognized my presence, and he would have acted accordingly to counter my actions. However, Aincera and Almarick received only a limited power over the Great Darkness. They are merely custodians.>

Aincera was limited to keeping the system created by Atein rolling. Just doing this had caused her sense of self to erode.

“You were the one that stopped Aunsaurus and Baldazark from being revived?”

<That’s right. As I’ve explained to you before.... This was one of the advantages I gained from joining the Great Darkness.>

The four Dragon Demon generals had become part of the Great Darkness.

However, only Reygus and Almarick had been revived. Aunsaurus and Baldazark had met their true death. This was a feat accomplished by Carlos from within the Great Darkness.

<So the fact that they were killed instead Reygus and Almarick wasn’t a coincidence?>

“I chose that outcome. As always, I aim for the optimal result..”

<Yes. In truth, I could have buried either Almarick and Reygus if I had chosen to do so. I could have theoretically eliminated three Dragon Demon generals, but I chose not to.>

He could bury two for certain. Carlos chose certainty in his fight. He picked Aunsaurus and Baldazark.

They were magicians. In terms of battle capabilities, they were Archmages that rivaled Atein.

“If they were revived, they would have been able to manage the Great Darkness better. Is that the reason why they were chosen?”

<That’s correct.>

If Aunsaurus and Baldazark were present, Carlos might not have been able to make the Guardian Shadows.

Carlos changed the topic.

<Azell. You talked to my thought construct before, right? After you went to sleep, the world faced two threats.>

“I did.”

Carlos’ thought construct had told him this. Absolute calamities that threatened the entire humanity had appeared, and the death of Atein had released them onto this world.

“In the context of our previous conversation, this being had been sealed within the Great Darkness?”

<Yes.>

“You became like this in the process of blocking them.”

<Correct.>

Carlos shrugged his shoulders as he gave an explanation.

<You might not be too interested in this, but it is important for me to explain what kind of being she was.>

“The second calamity..... I think I know what it is even if you don’t tell me.”

<Let’s talk about the first one for now. Our comrades that survived the Dragon Demon war fought against the first being that was unsealed..... We joined forces with the younger generation to stop her. This incident spurred me to research the dangers of the Great Darkness.>

“Which being was it?”

<She was the first to create the Dragon weapon. Her name was Iksseru.>

Azell’s eyes widened in surprise.

<I heard from Albatan at a later date that she was from the era of the Five Star Kingdom. I believe she was a descendant of Atein.>

“I heard about her. She’s a female Dragon Demon?”

<It seems the old man have already told you that story.>

“It was in passing. He didn’t put much importance on the story.”

Azell grumbled.

It would have been better if Albatan had told him this story earlier.

Carlos cackled as he spoke.

<She was... That's right. She wasn't a magician. She was a Dragon Arts practitioner. She created the first Dragon weapon, and it allowed her to realize a desire she shouldn't have had.>

“What kind of desire?”

Chapter 187 - Two Persons (5)

<Immortality.>

“.....”

<She didn't want immortality for herself. She wanted immortality for others. It was a time when humans died easily..... It seemed she couldn't stand it when the humans she treasured kept dying.>

Her Dragon weapon could exhibit incredible abilities, but she couldn't achieve her wish.

<In the end, it was like a curse for her. Iksseru had become an immortal, yet she tried to make her loved ones into immortal. However, they didn't become full immortals. On top of that, they weren't the same beings that she had loved.>

“Did they become monsters?”

<That's right. They became monsters that could extend their life span by eating their own species.>

What's worse, the cursed beings started to spread like a plague. They were autonomous, and they were able to create beings just like them.

As a price for immortality, their humanity was destroyed. They also couldn't procreate like humans. They could only eat and infect other humans. They were like a disease.

<These beings couldn't exist without eating humans, and they couldn't control their appetite. If left alone, these beings would have wiped out the human race.>

Moreover, they were fated to be wiped out after no humans were left on this world.

<This was why Atein sealed Iksseru in the Great Darkness, and the souls of the cursed beings were made part of the Great

Darkness.>

“.....”

Azell was at a loss for words. She really was someone that threatened the existence of humanity.

<She was an ancient being, yet she was incredibly strong. We were barely to win out against her. Unlike Atein, we were able to kill her.>

“Didn’t you say she was immortal? How is that possible?”

<Unlike Atein from the Five Stars kingdom era, we had a solution. You came up with it. It was a technique you used to kill Atein..>

“Are you talking about Extreme Extermination?”

Azell brought up the word he hadn’t thought about for a long time.

7

Extreme Extermination.

During the Dragon Demon war, it was the final domain reached by Azell.

He had an abundance of Dragon Demon magic, and he had connected his 13 Dragon weapons to maximize his power. The sword made out of light cut through the sky, and it produced a near infinite hail of swords..... If that power was focused in one place, it would create an extreme destructive phenomena that would destroy everything in this world.

That was the]Extreme Extermination.

It was a phenomenon that could be raised using the light sword. Without it, he wouldn’t have been able to win against Atein.

“Were you able to replicate it?”

<It had several troublesome restrictions, but we were able to

successfully replicate it. We used it to kill a being that was considered to be unkillable. That was why Atein had sealed her in the first place.>

“However, isn’t Atein is going to revived?”

<Atein isn’t an immortal existence. He left his essence within the Great Darkness. You really did kill him with your sword.>

Since his essence was within the Great Darkness, he just needed time to revive from his death. It didn’t matter if he was killed. If the Great Darkness existed, he would always revive someday. This was true for Atein and the Dragon Demon generals.

“I see.....”

Azell accepted his words.

In the final battle against Atein, the Extreme Extermination had a crucial role in defeating Atein. Atein’s defensive magic spells were sturdier than a castle, yet the Extreme Extermination had pierced through all of them. Azell was able to inflict a critical wound on Atein.

However, Atein wasn’t killed by the Extreme Extermination. He had fallen to Azell’s Sky Splitter. If Atein had been killed by the Extreme Extermination, he wouldn’t have been able to leave behind a curse or even a will.

Carlos continued to speak.

<Unlike him, Iksseru couldn’t be killed by any other method except the the Extreme Extermination. It was the result of her immortality.>

Before Azell discovered the Extreme Extermination phenomena, the beings sealed by Atein were immortals for all intents and purposes.

They became injured when they were stabbed, and they lost energy when they performed activities. However, their ability to

heal was endless. It didn't matter if their bodies were destroyed, or they exhausted their energy. They never died.

<Since we found a method called Extreme Extermination, they were no longer true immortals. Once they are killed, they cannot revive.>

“...does that mean it is also the answer to destroying the Great Darkness?”

<You are absolutely correct.>

Carlos clapped his hands.

Azell had picked up on one of the key points Carlos had been trying to convey.

They had to destroy the Great Darkness. If they don't destroy the Great Darkness, Atein would continue being revived.

The problem had always been the fact that they didn't have a realistic way to destroy the Great Darkness.

Each pillar holding up the Great Darkness were immortal beings. They had been sealed there, because Atein couldn't destroy them.

Moreover, each being were powerful enough to threaten the existence of humanity. They were calamities. They were powerful evil from myths, and they were on par with the Dragon Demon war in terms of threat to humanity.

<However, things are different now. We have the Extreme Extermination technique, and we have you, who can carry out that method..... We can end it.>

“Can't you do it too? You've recreated the Extreme Extermination already. I just have to teach you the secret.....”

<Didn't I tell you that there were troublesome restrictions to me using it? Azell, do you know why you were the first one in history to reach the domain of Extreme Extermination?>

Extreme Extermination was a phenomena 'discovered' by Azell.

Atein was the founder of magic. He was someone that could change the rules of the world, yet the Extreme Extermination had caused fear in such a being.

Azell thought for a brief moment before he answered Carlos.

“Is it the Sky Splitter?”

<You are correct. That weapon had started out as a beam of light, but it evolved to being able to control all forms of light. It is also possible to materialize light.... It can shift between the material and immaterial world. Your Dragon weapon transcends the common sense of this world.>

During the Dragon Demon war, Azell had been full of Dragon Demon magic. He had eight Rings of Life, and he possessed 13 Dragon weapons. For a short amount of time, he could generate power that rivaled Atein.

However, the Extreme Extermination couldn't be reached just because one could generate massive amounts of power.

One couldn't reach it even if one was able to concentrate the power into a single point.

These two prerequisites had to be activated at the same time. On top of that, a high-dimensional power that transcended the common sense of the world had to be applied.

The Sky Splitter was a Dragon weapon that had reached this domain.

The Dance of Shadows allowed Azell to be in multiple places, and his Sky Splitter could be used anywhere light could be reached. When he held his sword, he reached a domain that transcended time and space. No one except Azell could have defeated Atein in an one on one battle.

<No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't copy the Sky Splitter's ability. On the other hand, the abilities your other Dragon Weapons could be copied over time through time and effort.>

This was why Carlos had chosen to store the Sky Splitter with Azell. He determined the the Sky Splitter was something that was too important to be lost.

<Since I didn't have the Sky Splitter, I needed a sacrifice to create the Extreme Extermination phenomena.>

“What sacrifice?”

<I had to use a Dragon weapon as a sacrifice.>

“.....”

Azell swallowed his breath.

The meaning behind Carlos' words were clear.

<At the very least, I have to sacrifice a Dragon weapon to create the Extreme Extermination phenomena. Moreover, it can't be a Dragon weapon that hasn't yet reached its stable form. I needed a Dragon weapon of a caliber that could generate a certain scale of destructive power.>

“Did you perhaps.....”

<Yes, I used my Dragon weapon.>

A Dragon weapons wasn't a simple tool. It was a clone of one's soul. Carlos had developed his Dragon weapon over a long period of time, and it had been his companion through many life and death situations.

What emotions would he have felt when he had to sacrifice his Dragon weapon for a single use of a technique? Azell was having a hard time imagining the sense of loss that would have been felt by Carlos.

Carlos spoke.

<The second calamity was dismal.>

When he faced the second calamity, Carlos felt despair.

In the first calamity, he had face the Dragon Demon Iksseru, who

had created the first Dragon weapon. His side had taken massive loss in the fight against her. This was why Carlos hadn't been confident that he could avert the second calamity.

<My personal power had suffered, and I had lost most of my comrades. Moreover, the number of people that were willing to follow me was much smaller.>

Even during the fight against Iksseru, most of the veteran heroes of the Dragon Demon war were old or dead. The ones that were still alive had lost most of their battle capabilities they had possessed during their prime. Moreover, many of the survivors from the Dragon Demon war died in the fight against Iksseru.

<As time passed, our closest friends started to pass onto the next life one by one.>

Of course, the new generation produced many that possessed excellent talent.

However.....

Was it because there was a lack of urgency compared to era of the Dragon Demon war?

Only a very small number of the new generation were helpful.

<The fight against Iksseru was the impetus for me to start researching the Great Darkness. It allowed me to predict the time and location of the second calamity.>

“That calamity was Belrun?”

<Yes.>

The second calamity was the king of Death Belrun.

He was the first to transcend life and death. He had denied death through his own power to become the first immortal.

<Thankfully, I had plenty of time to prepare. I gathered companions, who were willing to fight with me. Moreover, I prepared an ace in the hole.>

At the time, he had no idea how strong Belrun was. Since he was a magician from ancient times, he might be unexpectedly weak. On the other hand, he might be strong like Iksseru.

The only thing certain was the fact that they couldn't give Belrun the time to recuperate. They had to stop him before he could gather information on this era. If he gained knowledge of the current era's magic, it was all over.

This was why Carlos had led his comrade to the faraway mountain range of Atisan.

Carlos had known when and where the fight would start. Belrun still didn't possess any information of the current era, so Carlos decided to use his final move from the start.

<I started the fight off with the Extreme Extermination. I'm sorry. I used your Dragon weapon as sacrifice.>

"I see....."

Carlos was able to get a direct hit in against Belrun. Thanks to the attack, they were able to gain a complete advantage over Belrun.

However, the Dragon weapon wasn't the only cost of using the Extreme Extermination. A significant backlash prevented Carlos from using the move again in the battle.

He hadn't been able to end everything with the surprise attack. That was his mistake.

Since events had turned out like that, it was impossible to kill Belrun..

What was his options? Should he have tried to seal Belrun like Atein had done?

Even that was impossible.

<There was a reason why I couldn't do it.>

Atein had the Great Darkness. Carlos didn't have anything. It was impossible to seal a being like Belrun with a simple Seal spell.

<In the end, I made a choice.>

“.....”

Carlos didn't explain any further. Azell's face became distorted. He could guess what method was used to seal Belrun.

“You became the vessel that sealed Belrun?”

<That is correct.>

The sound of laughter flowed out from Carlos' face, which was shrouded with darkness. It was a sad and empty sounding laughter.

Chapter 188 - Two Persons (6)

8

Carlos had used himself as a vessel to seal Belrun. He had done something equivalent to becoming Belrun.

Carlos had sealed Belrun, but the effects didn't hit him immediately. He had accepted the dangers of sealing Belrun within him, but he had thought he would be able to come up with a solution. This was why Carlos had been happy in the moment of his victory, and he had celebrated with his comrades.

However, he realized a bleak truth as time passed.

'This method won't work. I have to reproduce the same environment as when Belrun was sealed.'

After he agonized over it, Carlos came to a decision. Belrun's power was eating away at him, and his body was turning undead. This was why he had headed towards the mountain peak of Laus, and he had joined the Great Darkness. Finally, he was able to completely seal away Belrun.

The price of his action was on display right now.

He had nailed himself to this place. He was neither dead or alive. Instead of living the life of a human, he became weathered by the long passage of time.

Azell felt wretched as he looked towards Carlos.

"...was that really the only method available to you?"

<There was nothing else. Even now I cannot come up with a different method.> If he hadn't stopped Belrun, humanity would have been wiped out before Atein was revived.

<I regretted my decision countless times, and I despaired over it. However, I made the right choice. No one else could have done this. I was the only one....> He knew it. He knew it all too well.

Still, he felt tormented. His anguish was so large that he started to hate the world.

The world required endless sacrifice from him. He had to eternally suffer in this hell, so selfish and ignorant people could enjoy their peace.....

Wouldn't it be better if he had ended everything?

<If I didn't know for certain that you were going to wake up, I would have become a Demon king that despised this world.> Azell would wake up someday.

It was the only thread that maintained Carlos' resolve.

When Azell returned, his self mortification would be over. He would no longer despise the world, which needed his sacrifice to roll along. He just wanted to see the smile of his friend, who would end all of this. Azell would take over his responsibilities, and he would wrap things up.

<If it's you, you'll be able to end it. I want you put an end to this long and disgusting fight.> "Without fail....."

Azell held back his tears as he nodded his head.

"...I'll end it with my hands."

<Well, it is time for me to tell you my request.> After hearing Azell's answer, Carlos spoke in a tired manner.

<Please kill me, Azell.>

"...what?"

For a moment, Azell was sure he had misheard Carlos' words.

Carlos tilted his head.

<Ah. I guess kill is the wrong word to use. I'm already dead. In this case.....> "Stop joking around!"

Azell raised his voice. His voice trembled. He couldn't hide the confusion he was feeling.

“What nonsense are you talking....”

<Don't be like that, Azell.>

“What?”

<You already know. This isn't the time to throw a tantrum. There is no way you don't already know this.> “.....”

Azell's face hardened when Carlos spoke to him as if he was trying to soothe a child. However, it was akin to a crack forming on ice. His face started to slowly distort into a wretched expression.

<I'm already dead. Moreover, I'm closely related to Belrun..> Carlos and Belrun were already two sides of the same coin. One side couldn't be preserved while eliminating the other side.

<You probably realized it, while you listened to my story. Isn't that right? You shouldn't lie. You.... No, I don't want to be deceived.> “.....”

Azell looked as if he was about to cry. Carlos laughed when he saw Azell's expression.

<We aren't kids anymore. Haven't we sent several of our friends to the next life with our hands? Are you going to cry again? Why?> It had occurred several times during the Dragon Demon war.

They had taken care of those that were dying and in pain. They ended those that were changing into monsters, so they could die as humans. Then there were the Undeads created by their enemies. These Undeads attacked their old friends. Azell and Carlos had put them to rest.....

However, Azell never expected to carry out such a deed in this era. Moreover, he never imagined he would have to do it to Carlos.

“How can you ask me to.....”

<It is something only you can do.>

Carlos look up into the empty air as he spoke.

Azell couldn't see his face, but he got a feeling that Carlos had a peaceful smile on his face. It was as if Carlos had let go of all the burdens that he had carried all through his life.

<I couldn't sleep for a very long time. Do you know why?> “.....”

<I knew that Belrun would awaken when I went to sleep. I had to look at this darkness as I took in everything.> Carlos had been in hell. For all these years, Carlos wasn't allowed to rest even for a second.

The only reason he was able to endure through the years was the fact that he believed this moment would come some day.

<I'm tired now. No, I've been tired for a very long time. Please show me mercy, Azell.> “You.....”

Azell's throat was choked up, so he was having hard time speaking.

“...you are a tenacious bastard, Carlos.”

<I know. That is why I was able to last this long in this state.> Carlos pointed toward his chest.

<I want you to pull this out of me. It is my last present to you.> It was a wooden staff with a clear and round gem embedded at the top. It was pierced through Carlos' chest.

<If you take this out, he'll be released. Then.....> Carlos raised his hand as he pointed towards Azell.

<He will fight you.>

“.....”

<Belrun knows what I know. When the seal is broken, Belrun's consciousness will push to the fore. If that happens, he won't die quietly.> “You evil bastard.....”

Azell grinded his teeth. His vision started to turn murky. Azell realized that he had started crying at some point.

Carlos spoke to Azell.

<You promised, right?>

“Yes.....”

Azell spoke in a hoarse voice as he extended his hands.

“I’ll grant your wish, you bastard.”

<Oh. It has been a while since you’ve cussed at me.> When Azell grabbed the staff, Carlos looked up at him as he spoke.

<Azell.>

“.....”

<I’m sorry.>

Azell roughly extracted the staff.

9

Koo-roo-roo-roong.....!

A thunderous roar rang out, and the mountain peak of Laus, which had existed for perpetuity, shook.

The party had returned to the initial room, and they had been waiting for Azell. They became surprised.

What was going on?

“What the hell?”

Kairen’s expression hardened.

“What is it?”

A frightening wave of power was spreading into the surrounding.

It wasn’t just one. There were two of them. Moreover, one of them was very familiar to the party.

“Azell has brought out his Sky Splitter.”

Laura spoke, and at the same time, she activated her Dragon Demon magic.

-Come forth Dragon weapon! Vitan's Chalice!

The Vitan's Chalice made its appearance. It looked as if it was made from semi-transparent glass. Laura took hold of it as she spoke.

"Enemies are coming this way."

All at once, every member felt the gazes that were trained on them. From all direction, the beings without a real body started to show up. They were spirits that were being controlled by an evil power.

Kairen unsheathed his two swords, and he couldn't hide his dismay.

"Aren't they controlled by Carlos? So why....."

"I did have feelings of unease with them. However, that isn't the problem we should be focusing on right now. It is too cramped to fight in here. We should head out to assess what is going on right now."

Leticia quickly made an assessment. Laura nodded her head.

"Yes."

A distortion formed on the wall as the Path of Tears was activated. Kairen bit his lips.

"I was wondering why everything was going so smoothly."

When he swung his dual swords, Dragon Demon magic spread out like a storm as it swept up the spirits. As horrific screams filled with evil rang out, the party exited Laus through the Path of Tears.

Then.....

"It's Azell."

Laura pointed towards the sky.

A pillar of light that looked like lightning and fire streaked

through the sky. It was the Sky Splitter. After streaking across the skies over Laus, the light started to move all over the place.

“Who is he fighting?”

The power being emitted by Azell was terrifying. Even as Azell’s comrades, the incredible amount of Dragon Demon magic being generated by Azell shocked them. It spread into the surrounding like hail.

At that moment, the streak of light created by Azell converged with the streak of darkness.

They knew at a glance. The streak of darkness was another gathering of incredible magical energy.

The streaking of light and darkness clashed against each other. It looked as if a ball of darkness was bouncing around in the sky.

Ggah-gwa-gwa-gwa-gwahng.....!

Belatedly, the sound of the explosions started to reach them.

The streak of light moved faster than the speed of sound, and an incredible shockwave formed when it clashed against the darkness. There was enough destructive force to destroy a mountain. It could dry up a lake.

Laura understood the situation.

“Azell forced the battle into the skies.”

“Why would he do that?”

Kairen was puzzled.

He could tell at an instinctual level the enemy was powerful.

However, why did Azell drag him up into the sky? If the enemy was a powerful being, wouldn’t he want combine forces with his comrades to defeat him?

Laura shook her head from side to side. It seemed she had asked the same question to herself.

“I’m not sure.”

Was there a need for him to fight alone?

Or did he want to fight alone?

“Hmmm. In my opinion.....”

Suddenly, Leticia looked to side as she spoke.

“It seems Azell is trying to dump them onto us?”

When Laura opened her Path of Tears, tunnels made using spatial distortion appeared on the wall. Undeads leading an army of spirits started appearing from within these tunnels.

Kairen asked a question to the Undead that stood in the front.

“Didn’t you say you aren’t our enemy?”

He was the Undead that had lead them to the armory. The Undead, who didn’t possess a single fragment of bone, shrugged his shoulders.

<I did at the time. Do you really think there is permanence to an antagonistic relationship between rational beings? It isn’t to my knowledge. It has been a long time since I’ve been a human. I guess the commons sense of humans could have changed in that time.>

“I see. It seems you are either a philosopher or a magician. It seems your tongue is spouting unnecessarily complex ideas.”

<Thank you for the compliment. You guys will be great opponents for a warm up. Since I cannot help my mast, I’ll have to help him by killing you all.> “Master? Carlos?”

<I called him that until a moment ago.>

There was another layer of nuance to his words.

Laura realized something.

“I see why he is in the sky.”

“Mmm? What do you mean?”

When Kairen queried her, she gave an explanation.

“Azell is fighting the enemy that is the source to this power. However, the Undeads and the souls can’t reach them when they are up so high. Basically, Azell is weakening that unknown being’s power by fighting him in the air.”

Maybe, a few Undead could reach the sky. However, they couldn’t all reach there.

“I see. I can see what role Azell wants us to play in this.”

While Azell fought in the sky, his party was tasked to fight the Undead and the army of souls. Kairen shook off the confusion he was feeling. He queried her.

“Laura, can’t you block them from coming out?”

“Unfortunately, there are too many holes. It is like an ant mound.”

It was as she said. Numerous dimensional distortions were used to create paths, and countless Undeads were coming out from them.

“How very unfortunate. Shit. It is midday, yet we have to watch these unpleasant beings wriggle free.”

Surprisingly, Undeads and spirits were crawling out into the middle of the day. It seemed they didn't feel any pain from the sunlight.

‘Are their powers reduced? Hmm. When there is so many of them, I guess it doesn’t matter if their powers are reduced or not.’

Each of Azell’s party members were a match for a hundred, but would they really be fine against this massive army.

There was no reason to worry about it.

“I don’t think we’ll have to worry about going up against superior numbers.”

Leticia looked around her surrounding as she spoke.

It was as she said. Countless Guardian Shadows were making noise as they gathered. The Guardian Shadows had complete surrounded the region.

The leader of the Undead tilted his head as he found all of this troublesome.

<Jeez. I'm not happy to see them.>

His following words angered Kairen.

<Even if we kill them, the number of subjects to our king won't grow. It'll be a useless labor.> “Since you don't have a mouth, I can't say I want to crush your mouth. Anyways, I'll make it so that you will no longer be able to speak.”

<Ah ah. I won't stop you from spouting nonsense. Our king doesn't care what a living being has to say. You guys are precious resources that will become his subjects.> Kairen no longer held back. He swung his Dragon swords in a heroic manner.

The battle on the ground started.

Chapter 189 - Two Persons (7)

10

The Sky Splitter was deployed. Azell's magical energy became one with his clones as they streaked across the sky.

The evil spirits on the ground were emanating magical energy without reserve. The battered body of Carlos....no, Belrun's body was flying high in the air. He had shot up much higher than the mountain peak of Laus.

-Koohk koohk koohk. This is fun.

Azell heard a voice infused with a bleak magical energy within his head.

It wasn't the voice of Carlos, which he had heard within Laus. The voice didn't exist. It was a dense mental wave made out of magical energy.

It was a curse that attacked Azell's mind. If he was a normal person, he would have lost his sanity after hearing the voice.

-The evil spirits are bound by their distrust of this world. I see. It seems air isn't the only thing that thins out at this high of an altitude.

Belrun's power was founded on the massive amount of evil spirits he controlled. He was just one being, yet he had control over countless spirits in his ranks. He was the King of the Dead. The evil spirit could transfer their magical energy to Belrun to create a particular phenomena. The level of power that was transferred could create a catastrophe.

Azell had predicted this, so he immediately brought out his Sky Splitter. He dragged Belrun into the skies.

-I never knew I had this weakness. You live and learn.

The evil spirits were bound by misgivings that was spread across

the surface of the world.

They were created through the death of humans. This was why they couldn't use their full power in locations that were absent of death or the misgivings of living beings.

Basically, humans as well as the evil spirits couldn't exist this high in the air. If it was through Belrun's power, he might be able to drag the spirits into the air by sheer force. However, he would have to consume power to make this happen. The consumption of power would override any benefit in bringing up the spirits.

This scenario was possible, because he was Azell. It was also thanks to the information given to him by Carlos before Belrun had awakened.

"Did you say you are the King of Death Belrun?"

Azell glared at him as he spoke.

"This sky is where you will die."

-Oh. It seems you are a human that tells funny jokes. Haven't you heard of me before?

He snickered.

-I am the first to defy death. I didn't need outside help. I am a king, who used my own power to defy the way of the world. The concept of death doesn't apply to me. That is why....

The cursed darkness rose up. The faces of many evil spirits appeared from within, and a hail-like attack was sent towards Azell.

-There is no way I will die.

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

The heavens shook.

It wasn't a darkness simply made out of magical energy. Even the sound wave was a vector for the cursed power.

“I will prove how flimsy that statement is.”

However, as Azell approached Belrun, his figure disappeared.

At the same time, light erupted in all directions as it ripped through the sky.

The cursed darkness started burning up, but the sound of this event was drowned out by the roar caused by the light. It was like a flame and a lightning. The beam of light pierced through the being called the King of Death.

However.....

‘This is.....?!’

Azell was taken aback.

The Sky Splitter had turned into a beam of light, and when it was about to reach the King of Darkness, a gulf suddenly formed. Belrun was suddenly so far away that it was hard to see him with the naked eye. Azell was well aware of what the appearance of this phenomena implied.

‘Endless Plain? Shit. He is already able to use such techniques?’

It was like the dimensional distortion created by the Vitan’s Chalice. It was the Endless Plain.

It was such an unexpected development that Azell was taken unawares. His real body was separated from his clones. He was so far away that his clones dissipated, and for a brief moment, he had lost track of the Sky Splitter.

The cursed darkness came at him like a hail storm. Azell had lost his Sky Splitter, so it seemed he wouldn’t be able to block such an all encompassing attack.

-Come Dragon weapon! Unyielding Fortress!

However, a shout containing his will exploded forth from the darkness.

A wave of transparent light erupted to block the hail storm of darkness. After creating a barrier, he kept summoning his other Dragon weapons.

-Storm Dragon's Wings! Underworld Ruler's Marksman! Master of Raging Waves!

Aside from the Sky Splitter, he summoned four additional Dragon weapons.

It was something no one else had been able to replicate after the Dragon Demon war. The summoning of multiple Dragon weapons were an unsurpassed ability that only Azell, Duke Croix Nidel and Atein could use!

Ooooooooooooooooooh!

The space started to ripple.

A wave of transparent power shook the space, and the energy generated from within this space was absorbed.

The hail of darkness, which was about to engulf Azell, was swallowed up by a countercurrent.

At the same time, the Endless Plain was destroyed, and the dimensional distortion righted itself.

-What is this?

Belrun's shocked voice rang out.

A sword made out of light had pierced through his body.

"Even if you are able to imagine up such a large space, you won't be able to leave behind the light."

Azell had been flustered by the formation of the Endless Plain, and he had lost contact with his Sky Splitter for a very brief moment. He had brought out the Unyielding Fortress to establish his defense, and at the same time, he regained connection with his Sky Splitter. He used the Sky Splitter to attack Belrun, who had been at the end of the vast space.

“You might be borrowing Carlos’ knowledge, but as a magician, you are merely an old relic, who have fallen behind the times.”

Belrun was one with Carlos. He was able to use Carlos’ magical knowledge. It was as Azell had said. Belrun had fallen behind the times, but he had access to the evolved magic spells. Belrun had no compunction in using these new spells, but he couldn’t use it freely like Carlos.

Belrun would need to use Carlos’ magical knowledge to update his own magic spells, which was full of holes. However, he needed a lot of time to accomplish this task.

“I won’t give you the opportunity to turn into a calamity. You will die here and now.”

-Hmmp. Extreme Extermination. I’ll acknowledge that it is a scary technique. However, do you think I’ll let you use it?

“What can you do?”

Azell snorted.

At the same time, something penetrated Belrun.

-Kuhk.....?

Belrun staggered. Arrows, which were invisible to him, impacted on his body.

It was the Dragon weapon named Underworld Ruler’s Marksman. Since Belrun had Carlos’ knowledge, he immediately knew this fact. He tried to defend against it, but he couldn’t block it entirely. He could only minimize the damage.

Azell used this opportunity to send the Sky Splitter towards Belrun. Azell resolved into several dozen clones, and a destructive light impacted on Belrun.

“I’m well aware of it. You are very sturdy, and you have an endless reservoir of energy.”

He had heard it from Carlos. Belrun had a reservoir of magical

energy that was larger than the magical energy possessed by Atein and the Dragon Demon generals combined. Of course, the current Azell could barely contend with him in terms of magical energy.

“However, you are merely a spirit that has lost twice before. Carlos had trouble with your immortality. It wasn’t as if he afraid of you. I’m just here to finish the battle that Carlos had already won.”

Azell’s clones spoke as one. Belrun kept attacking the clones, but he couldn’t find Azell’s true body. All the clones possessed presence, and they all attack him as if they were real.

‘This makes no sense!’

Even if Azell was great at using his Cloning technique, they were fighting in midair. It might be understandable with his clone, but how could his real body fly around the air freely like a bird?

The answer lay within Carlos’ knowledge.

-Storm Dragon’s Wings? Shit. I can’t believe a human has such abilities.....!

Dragon weapon Storm Dragon’s Wings..

It was the identity of the flame-like red light that was surrounding Azell’s body. He was able to fly through the air using his Dragon weapon, and he could do it better than a magician.

-You bastard!

Belrun raged.

There was little oxygen present in the high altitudes, and the pressure in the atmosphere suddenly rose. A fierce wind arose, and a thunderbolt roared from within.

Ggwah-roo-roong! Ggwa-gwahng!

Azell didn’t blink at all.

-Koo-ahhhhhk!

Belrun let out a yell.

The attack was similar to the magic used by Almarick's Dragon weapon Storm's Scream. Belrun had copied it.

However, Azell let the thunderbolt flow off of him, and he counterattacked.

At the same time, consecutive explosions occurred around Belrun.

Ggwah-gwa-gwahng! Ggwah-gwahng!

-Is this the Box of Hate.....?

Masses of transparent magical energy were floating around the air, and they started exploding when triggered by magical energy. Belrun had suffered under this attack before. Carlos had used it against him.

The Box of Hate reacted and exploded in reaction to the magical energy making up a spell. One had to increase the density of the masses of magical energy, and one had to create a dense shell around it. It allowed one to cut off the masses of magical energy from the Box of Hate.

One had to waste an incredible amount of magical energy to do this. However, this was the only counter to the Box of Hate devised by Atein, Baldazark and Aunsaurus. Belrun willingly accepted the inefficiency of this method, since he had an incredible reservoir of magical energy.

"I'll show you the power of my Dragon weapons, which had been under the custody of Carlos."

The 32 clones of Azell tirelessly assaulted Belrun.

Azell's clones flew around using the Storm Dragon's Wings, and the Box of Hate suppressed Belrun's magic. The Sky Splitter turned into a pillar of light as it kept attacking Belrun, and the Underworld Ruler's Marksman pierced through Belrun's defense

to pierce through him.

It was as if several hundred magicians were attacking him.

-Dragon weapon dismissed! Master of Raging Wave! Unyielding Fortress!

After dismissing two Dragon weapons, Azell summoned new Dragon weapons.

-Come Dragon weapons! Moon Sword! Cry of the Phoenix! Defender of Dawn!

He summoned seven Dragon weapons all at once. Belrun was in a state of shock.

-How can this be! How is this possible.....!

Belrun knew that each Dragon weapon were terrifying weapons. Azell had summoned seven of them all at once!

“I’ve already told you this. This sky is where you will die. Carlos and I have already determined this.”

-Yes.

He heard another voice from his side. Azell turned to look at him with a complex expression on his face.

Carlos was laughing next to Azell.

-I should thank Count Banan for this.

He had neat brown hair and cold gray eyes. He was a young man. Carlos looked exactly like how Azell remembered. However, Carlos’ figure shimmered as if it was a mirage made out of light.

This was the power of the Defender of Dawn.

Belrun was pressing down on Carlos’ personality, but he was able to give help through this particular Dragon weapon. Azell could make at most eight combatants with the Defender of Dawn, but he focused the weapon’s power to create a single clone of Carlos.

-Don’t make such a face, Azell. It makes me not want to go.

Carlos smirked as he spoke.

Then he used the magical energy granted to him. The clone possessed an exact replica of Carlos' personality and abilities. Since he was being provided power by the Dragon weapon, Carlos could cast magic that was superior to the ones he could cast in his prime.

-Y...you bastard! You are only my vessel, yet.....!

Belrun was helpless as he started being pushed backwards.

It didn't matter that he had overwhelming magical energy, and it didn't matter that he possessed Carlos' magical knowledge. There was an absolute gulf between having the knowledge and actually being able to apply that knowledge

-I've been planning this for a very long time. I felt annoyed at the fact that I wasn't able to end this long fight over 100 years ago.

Carlos spoke as he overwhelmed Belrun in the magical battle. There was clear gratification in his demeanor.

-At the time, if Azell had been with me, you would have been cooked. Just separating you from the Undead army reduced you into this state. According to my calculations, you can generate only one fifth of your power once you entered into the air.

The power of a magician varied in many ways depending on the preparations made by the magician.

It was similar to an army's strength. It came down to how well the soldiers were equipped, and how well the army was supplied. Magician were incomparably stronger in their bases where they had access to their facilities and tools.

The scary thing about Belrun was the unlimited power he continuously gained from the Undead and evil spirits. It was how Belrun was able to use many of his spells and curses at the same time.

-From the standard of this era, you are still scary. However, what

are you going to do now that you won't be able to lean on your immortality. I wonder what you are feeling right now.

Carlos was thorough in his taunt against Belrun.

Carlos had suffered for more than hundred years, because of Belrun's immortality. He was full of joy, because he would be able to end this chapter of his life.

As he spoke, light started gathering around him.

The blue sky started to burn up with light. A tree made out of light was formed. Its numerous branches started splitting the heavens.

It was as if a lightning was magnified. In the midst of this scene, Azell held his blue Dragon weapon as he stared at Belrun.

-Azell.

Carlos spoke as he turned to look at him.

-Let's not drag this out.

"Carlos....."

When he saw Carlos' face, mixed emotions appeared on Azell's face. Carlos had already become a part of history, yet Azell's memories were still fresh in his mind. The memories from their past kept replaying in his mind.

When they first met, Azell thought Carlos was a rude magician.

He remembered all the times they had bickered with each other.

He remembered their youthful follies.

Then there were the times where they discussed each other's plans for the future.....

-My mind is already made up.

Carlos let out a gentle laughter.

The light sword was complete.

When Azell wanted it, a hail of light swords would fall towards this location.

“.....”

Azell wordlessly raised his sword. An extremely hoarse voice flowed out of his mouth.

“...I’ll resent you forever.”

-Please do.

Carlos shrugged his shoulders as he let out a sad laughter.

-Just don’t forget about me.

Azell didn’t answer him.

Then.... The sword of light split the sky as it stretched out.

Chapter 190 - Transition of Tactics (1)

1

The light burned the sky, and silence descended.

It didn't take too long for the fight on the ground to finish after the fight in the sky finished. The Undead army had remained unharmed under the sun thanks to Belrun's power. The Undead army screamed as they burned under the sunlight. It was truly easy for Azell's party and the Guardian Shadows to wipe out the remnants of the Undead army.

A good amount of time had passed after the fight on the ground was over. Azell finally descended from the sky.

His party members tried to ask him about what had happened, but they hesitated when they saw the expression on his face. His expression was too tragic.

Azell was the first one to open his mouth.

"You should use this, duke."

Azell lifted the staff towards Kairen. After accepting it, Kairen asked in bewilderment.

"What is this?"

"It is Carlos' keepsake."

"...shouldn't a magician use this item?"

"You have to use it, duke. You have the most potential in terms of developing as a tactician."

"Mmmm?"

There was no context to his explanation, so Kairen was still confused. Azell looked tired as he gave an explanation.

"It is a magical item that will allow you to command the Guardian Shadows."

The staff, which had been pierced through Carlos, had been key to sealing Belrun. It also had the function of controlling the Guardian Shadows. Carlos was able to control the Guardian Shadows through his will using this item, and he was able to gather information through the Guardian Shadows.

Laura mumbled to herself in surprise when she heard his explanation.

“It is similar to the Great Darkness.....”

“It isn’t similar. It is the Great Darkness.”

“Huh?”

“I’ll explain it to you later. Aside from that, I have a lot I have to explain, but.... I want to rest for a little bit. I don’t want to do anything right now.”

Azell spoke those words as he sat on the ground.

There was a mountainous amount of stories he had to tell them. He had to think over the stories, and he had to choose, which ones he wanted to tell them. There was so much that he felt lost.

Despite this fact, he just wanted to rest.

For now, he wanted to rest despite what was waiting for him in the present and the future.

2

“I have no idea what’s going on.”

Almarick was taken aback.

Something had happened.

However, he had no idea what had happened.

<What’s the problem?>

Reygus queried.

“The fog has lifted.”

<Are you planning on changing career to become a magician?>
“Of course not.”

<What about it?>

“The problem is the Vitan’s Chalice.”

Almarick had authority over a portion of the Great Darkness, so he was able to sense the Dragon weapons used by the Dragon Demon generals. However, the degree of precision in detecting the Vitan’s Chalice had become unusually low after Azell acquired it.

He had even lost track of it not too long ago. Then it appeared in some random location. It seemed someone had the ability to circumvent his tracking ability.

However, it was as if a fog had been lifted after that event. He could accurately sense the location of the Vitan’s Chalice.

<Hmmm. I was fooled once. I don’t want to be fooled again, but.....> Reygus tapped the nasal bridge of his skull as he spoke.

The signal of the Vitan’s Chalice had disappeared for a short amount of time, and it had appeared in a random location. Almarick and Reygus led the elite troops to the location, but the only thing they found were a bunch of Guardian Shadows. At that point, Almarick wondered if Laura had set a trap for them. However, he didn’t think she had the capability of duping his detection ability.

<Still, shouldn’t we check it out anyways?> “That is why I sent the kids. I told them to avoid any direct confrontation.”

When Almarick and Reygus realized they had fallen for a trap, they quickly returned to the Plain of Darkness. If Azell’s party had attacked the Plain of Darkness while they were gone, they would have been able to fend off Azell’s party. However, the Plain of Darkness would have had to pay a steep price for doing so.

“I have no idea. I don’t know what they are planning.....”

Almarick furrowed his brows. Reygus spoke.

<I have one important thing I have to tell you.> “What is it?”

<I have only one life now.>

“What do you mean by that?”

<It is as I’ve said. If my body is completely destroyed again, I won’t be able to revive again.> “How can you be sure? What proof do you have?”

<You aren’t an Undead. Can you really know something only an Undead would know? I’m sure of it. I can’t be revived any more.> “Are you saying something has gone wrong with the Great Darkness?”

Almarick was taken aback. Reygus wasn’t kidding. At the very least, he believed what he was saying.

<Aunsaurus and Baldark should have been revived, yet they weren’t revived. Are you sure you will be able to revive in the future? The king’s plans aren’t perfect and faultless.> “Mmmm.....”

Almarick groaned.

On the other hand, Reygus looked excited.

<Our magician friends weren’t able to revive, so we can’t do anything about it until the king revives. However, I like it.> “You sound as if you’ve lost your mind.”

<Kook kook kook. If you are able to revive multiple times, you won’t value your own life. It is not in my nature to use such cheap methods. Even if I have one life, I’ll willingly put it on the line. That is the way of a man.> “You are already living your second life. You are just being shameless with your words.”

<The milk has already been spilled, so what can I do? I just push forward even if it is shameless.> “Anyways.....”

Almarick realized he was laughing as he ragged on Reygus.

His blood was boiling.

He had calmed down a lot, but he used to be a beast-like warrior. He changed after he revived.

Was it because he became older?

No, that wasn't it.

If time caused his personality to change, it would have changed much sooner. Before he died, he was like a living history book. He had lived for a very long time.

The change was caused by the power given to him by Atein.

In his past life, he knew he was immortal, yet it hadn't felt like it. However, when he was truly revived, he couldn't live his life with as much zeal as before.

When living as a life as a warrior, one knew that one would fall someday by the sword. It didn't matter how powerful you were.

When he was born as a 1st generation Dragon Demon, he had faced fierce competition. He didn't have any parents that sheltered him. He had to fight everything in his environment to survive.

He was able to fight with such zeal, because he had only one life. If he died, everything he worked for would be for naught. He fought with zeal, because everything he enjoyed would come to an end.

When Reygus saw Almarick's expression, he cackled.

He asked Almarick a question.

<You like it too, right?>

"I don't want to agree with you, but....."

Almarick couldn't help it. The corner of his mouth lifted into a smirk.

"I can't help it. You are right."

An emotion that burned in his chest in the past was rekindled.

Azell's party quickly exited the Atisan mountain range. They no longer had any reasons to stay there.

While they were doing so, Kairen was going through the process of identifying and controlling the Guardian Shadows.

"There is about 12,000 Guardian Shadows that can be mobilized."

The Guardian Shadows were basically immortal before this event. They were able to be revived when they perished. It just took time.

However, this wasn't the case now.

Belrun's power had been a big part of why they were able to be revived. Since Belrun was dead, they couldn't be revived after they perished.

"Even at this moment, their numbers are being replenished, but..... We are consuming faster than we are adding to the force."

The power of revival was gone, but the system of the Guardian Shadows remained intact. Aside from the Dragon Demon king worshippers, the entire continent provided the Guardian Shadows with information. Moreover, those that possessed eternal enmity towards the Dragon Demon king worshippers continued to become Guardian Shadows.

Azell asked him a question.

"Did you come up with a good idea?"

"I think so. First, we'll have to contact the friends of our organization in each country. We'll have to update them on what is going on, and we'll use this opportunity to see all their faces. The way we run this organization will change drastically."

Carlos hadn't used the Guardian Shadows as his voice, because he wanted to keep his secrets hidden. It would have been over even if one person had found out his existence.

Azell's party wasn't under such restriction.

Carlos had created an excellent system. Kairen sent the Guardian Shadows as emissary, and he would be able to use the Guardian Shadows like a communication spell.

The only downside was the fact that Kairen couldn't sort through all the information.

Carlos had become part of the system, so he could manage the massive amount of information. However, Azell's party couldn't do that. They could give specific orders to the Guardian Shadows, and they could only receive reports from the Guardian Shadows. They couldn't hear and see everything the Guardian Shadows observed.

Kairen realized this fact, so he spoke to Azell.

"At the very least, we'll have to keep one Guardian Shadow with each member."

"Yes. I am thinking about using half of the Guardian Shadows as noncombatants."

Kairen started explaining his plan.

What did the party need the most right now?

Military force?

Of course, they needed it. The members of Azell's party were powerful as individuals. However, the Demon King worshippers were numerous, and they were all over the continent.

If they had to prioritize, strength wasn't at the top of their needs.

"The thing we need the most is information."

Kairen was firm with his statement.

The Guardian Shadows had been able to become a thorn in the sides of the Plain of Darkness. It wasn't, because they were overwhelmingly more powerful than the Plain of Darkness.

Of course, they were superior combatants that could sway the balance of power in this era. Even the weakest amongst them could gain employment as a combatant anywhere. However, their number wasn't as large as they had assumed.

It did come down to numbers.

There were enough members to make up a secret organization that could terrorize their enemies from the background. However, they weren't an army that could fight all over the world.

"The Plain of Darkness is causing mischief all over the world, and they are using the opportunities created to their advantage. What if they are trying to take over the world without a direct confrontation? There are a very limited number of ways to achieve this goal."

The Plain of Darkness had used this plan to great effect, and they had almost taken over the world before.

If it wasn't for the Guardian Shadows, the Plain of Darkness would have planted puppets in leadership roles. They would have controlled the world from the back. However, this plan was no longer feasible thanks to the Guardian Shadows.

"The two sides are able to compete with each other, because both sides possess transcendent information capabilities."

The Plain of Darkness used the Great Darkness to create a massive information net that encompassed the whole world.

The Guardian Shadows used the awareness of people as their information net.

If one side's intelligence capabilities fell short, the balance would have been broken. Still, neither side could dominate each other, so this boring fight continued to go on.

"We have to get ahead of them. We have to slowly chip away at their organization, which is like a well-oiled machine.."

The information capabilities of the Plain of Darkness remained intact, but a structural defect had occurred in the information capabilities of the Guardian Shadows.

Carlos was gone, but that wasn't the problem. The bigger loss was the Keepers of the Prophecy.

The Keepers of Prophecy received the information from the Guardian Shadows, and they moved their forces in the most effective manner. They had taken on the role of commanders. They were gone now. The hands and feet remained, but the head was removed from the Guardian Shadows.

From now on, Azell's party had to act as the head of this system. If they wanted to do this, they had to receive information that everyone could comprehend. The Guardian Shadows had a hard time communicating with others, and there was no point in receiving unfiltered information from them.

"We have to use our limited forces to maximum efficiency. We'll have to do that until we destroy the Great Darkness."

This was like eating away at a sand castle with a flag planted on top.

The destruction of the Great Darkness meant the destruction of the Guardian Shadows. If they ate away at the Great Darkness, it also meant they were diminishing the power of the Guardian Shadows.

If both sides were taking damage, they had to make it so that their opponent took on the bigger wound. Kairen already understood the meaning behind the battle.

"Pillars of the Great Darkness."

If they wanted to neutralize the Great Darkness, they had to kill the sealed beings. They had to do what they had done to Belrun.

"Waypoints for the Road of Emptiness."

The Road of Emptiness were the main reason why the Plain of Darkness could work behind the scenes. They had to destroy it. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that the loss of the Road of Emptiness would cut off their strategic lifeline.

This was the crux of Kairen's new plan.

"I want to use half of the Guardian Shadows to monitor the Road of Emptiness.."

The Guardian Shadows didn't have the ability to articulate complex information. However, they possessed the ability to carry out complex instructions. If they were given clear instructions, it wouldn't be too hard to pass along missives.

Kairen opened a map. He spoke with Laura, Yuren and Leticia to label the waypoints of the Road of Emptiness. He numbered each site, then he sent Guardian Shadows there. They would act as observers.

"They know where we are thanks to the Vitan's Chalice. If it is as Azell said, they can track us with precision in real time."

"...I'm sorry."

At Kairen's comment, Laura apologized in a sullen manner. Kairen smirked.

"I'm not try to be mean to you. The Vitan's Chalice is a risk we have to shoulder. It gives away our location, but at the same time, it makes them predictable. We can discern their movements, and we can spoil their plan."

If they kept tabs on the troops travelling through the Road of Emptiness, they would be able to keep track of what the Plain of Darkness was trying to do. This was why Kairen didn't hesitate to invest half of the Guardian Shadows to this task.

"Let's see which side ends up with the flag from the fallen sand castle. Shit. I'll make sure to deplete their forces before Atein is born. They won't be able to recreate the Dragon Demon war."

Kairen's eyes burned. He made the declaration as he glared at the map.

Chapter 191 - Transition of Tactics (2)

4

Azell's party left the mountain peak of Laus, and they started moving in earnest after 10 days.

The leaders of the Plain of Darkness became very frustrated when this occurred.

It wasn't too hard to locate them. They just needed to ascertain the location of the Vitan's Chalice to find them.

Moreover, they didn't have to be worried about it being a trap. They confirmed on three occasions that the tracking ability was working perfectly.

However, they couldn't catch up to Azell's party.

"It really makes one shudder. I never expected them to move in this manner....."

Kieren, who was the successor of Dragon Demon general Baldazark, mumbled to himself.

Azell's party moved as if they didn't have a destination in mind.

Azell's party was already moving at a transcendent speed, but now they were going all over the place. They looked as if they were going in one direction, yet they suddenly changed direction in the opposite direction. The Plain of Darkness couldn't catch up to them.

The Road of Emptiness wasn't all-powerful. The waypoints were fixed, and the number of people it could transport was limited.

Basically, the Plain of Darkness couldn't predict the path taken by Azell's party, so they couldn't concentrate their forces in one place. On top of that....

"Eight locations were destroyed in just 10 days....."

Niberis was facing him, and she couldn't believe the report she was reading.

She didn't know why, but.... No, Azell's party definitely had a hand in doing this. The Guardian Shadows had changed up their fighting style.

Until now, the Guardian Shadows had reacted in a strictly defensive manner. When Dragon Demon king worshippers were detected, the Guardian Shadows would intercept them in a defensive move.

However, the Guardian Shadows had completely flipped to take an offensive approach. When the route of Azell's party was predicted, the Plain of Darkness mobilized to send troops towards them. However, the nearest waypoints were destroyed before that could happen. It was done by the members of the Guardian Shadows organization and several hundred Guardian Shadows.

It was like Kairen and Beorein within the Rulain kingdom. Each kingdom possessed members that were part of the Guardian Shadow's organization. Moreover, all of them were skilled fighters. The Dragon Demon king worshippers couldn't take them lightly. These members led over 100 Guardian Shadows to attack the waypoints. There was no way the Plain of Darkness could defend against it

Moreover.....

"The information regarding the forgotten techniques have been spread amongst them. I'm sure of it."

Kieren's face hardened as he spoke.

Not all of their forces were completely wiped out in the fight against the Guardian Shadows. Some had run away with their lives intact.

This report was the result of gathering all accounts from the survivors. The Plain of Darkness realized that their advantage in

skill over the rest of the world was diminishing.

The organization called the Guardian Shadows were contacting strong people in each nation, and they were given key points to the forgotten techniques.

To be precise, the information was being delivered even at this moment.

“White Sword Count Rakadi of the Liros kingdom. It is true that he is a very skilled, but he wasn’t at a level where he could take out two of our senior officers by himself.”

Rakadi was like Kairen. He was a Dragon Majin, yet he was a lord of a human kingdom. He was the count in the Liros kingdom.

He was a very skilled Dragon Arts practitioner, and he was given the nickname of the White Sword Count. The loss of his parents at the hands of the Plain of Darkness had made him join the Guardian Shadows. All the members of the Rakadi tribe were very skilled, so the Plain of Darkness had paid special attention to them.

This was why they had a lot of information regarding Rakadi tribe. However, in the recent attack at the waypoint of the Road of Emptiness, the Rakadi tribe’s power greatly exceeded the assessment made by the Plain of Darkness.

It didn’t mean that the Rakadi tribe had learned and used the forgotten techniques in such a short amount of time.

They were like the Dragon Sword Count Kairen of Tarantos. They might have lost their techniques, but aside from this fact, they had cultivated scary amount of skill. Their resistance became much stronger just from knowing what kind of techniques were being used by the elite troops of the Plain of Darkness.

Niberis spoke.

“However, they aren’t the true problem.”

“...yes.”

Kieren threw down the report as he let out a sigh.

“Great sinner Azell Karzark.”

In the past 10 days, eight waypoints to the Road of Emptiness was destroyed.

Azell had personally destroyed four of them.

“The Sky Splitter, Storm Dragon’s Wing, Crying Phoenix..... Each and every one of them are ridiculous Dragon weapons.”

It was true that the ability of Azell’s party to travel was ridiculous. Each member were capable of moving quickly, yet they were using Vitan’s Chalice at strategic moments to travel a great amount of distance.

On the other hand, Azell’s ability to move was incomprehensible from a common sense point of view. The Storm Dragon’s Wing’s gave him speed equal to a flying dragon, and he was able to move fly freely through air. Moreover, he could locally control the pressure to create violent gales.

The Crying Phoenix was the only Dragon weapon that was capable of fighting by itself. Its battle capabilities changed depending on how much power its owner possessed. However, if the legends were to be believed, this weapon was scary in the hands of Azell. It was as if a Dragon that possessed wisdom was using its magic.

One of the terrifying abilities of this Dragon weapon was its mobility. Even if the owner was asleep , it could move through the air with its owner in tow.

The Plain of Darkness couldn’t find a solution to this problem.

They could only defeat Azell’s party if they concentrated their elite troops in one place. However, Azell’s party wasn’t giving them the opportunity to do so.

“We are taking way too much loss when compared to their loss.”

It wasn't as if the Plain of Darkness was being beaten unilaterally. They were causing the continent to fall into chaos, and they induced the fight between human nations. Humans were suffering under self-inflicted wounds. The Guardian Shadows were trying to put this matter to rest, but the side had been split. It would be difficult for them to stitch up the situation.

Moreover, the Guardian Shadows weren't winning in overwhelming fashion.

"The fact that our side can't win if we don't step forward means that the situation is serious."

The Plain of Darkness had reacted to their opponent's moves. They had dispatched elite troops at each waypoint, and when a battle occurs, they would send more troops as support.

Niberis and Kieren had been inserted into this place, and they were able to defeat the Guardian Shadows. The members of the Guardian Shadows were strong, but they were helpless against two Dragon Majins using their powerful Dragon weapons.

"Laura....."

Niberis mumbled to herself. Her words carried anger.

Why did their enemies know all the waypoints to the Road of Emptiness?

The answer was obvious. Laura knew where all the waypoints were located at.

Kieren spoke.

"This is a very serious problem."

"You don't have to tell me it is a problem. I already know."

"That isn't what I meant."

At his words, Niberis glared at Kieren. She had an ill-humored expression on her face. However, Kieren was serious.

“Our enemies know our secret. Moreover, they are attacking us with all their might. That is serious in itself, but that is not what we should be truly fearing right now.”

“What are you trying to say?”

“Niberis.... After the Dragon Demon war ended, this is the first time we’ve fought a defensive battle.”

“What?”

“We were always the one to attack. We just had to demonstrate that the defense set up by our enemies were faulty.”

The Plain of Darkness hadn’t been fighting a war.

One was either defending an established structure or one was attacking.

Which one was more difficult?

Of course, it was more difficult to defend than attack.

The Plain of Darkness didn’t possess the power to wage an all out war against the world, so they always attacked from the darkness.

“Until now, the Guardian Shadows had been the barrier protecting the world. It was sturdy, but in the end, it was only a barrier.”

However, their roles had been flipped now.

Until now, the Plain of Darkness didn’t even reveal their castle wall, which could be attacked. The Plain of Darkness was a fortress blessed with natural barriers for defense. Even if they lost a head-on battle with humanity, they could come back to the Plain of Darkness. It would be difficult to wipe out the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

This was why they were able to survive through the Dragon Demon war. In the first place, it was impossible to lead a large force into the Plain of Darkness without using the Road of Emptiness.

“However, our castle wall is exposed now. If we lose our castle wall, we lose the power to fight against the world.”

Niberis felt a chill run up her spine when she heard Kieren’s insight. She finally understood the problem he was pointing out.

The Dragon Demon king’s army had always been conquerors and invaders. After coming to the Plain of Darkness, they had never been in the defensive position.

Now they were required to take on that role.

However, the two of them still didn’t realize something. Azell’s party had something more critically damaging than what the two of them had observed.

5

Dragon Demon princess Arrieta and Dragon Demon prince Seigar had stopped the 2nd Grand Alliance of Darkness. After resolving the situation in the Balan forest, they were given an extended vacation.

However, their vacation didn’t last long. It had become a bit less heated, but there was a war going on with the Liros kingdom. Arrieta and Seigar was expecting an order to enter into the battle occurring along the eastern border..

The two of them expected a call from their mother, the Dragon Demon Queen Lier.

However....

“You are?”

Seigar became surprised when he ran into this person at Lier’s palace. He went into his battle stance, and at the same time, he realized he had made a mistake.

‘I should have brought my long sword!’

He had been called into the palace by his mother, so he hadn’t armed himself. Moreover, Seigar’s weapon was a large and heavy

weapon. This was why he didn't carry it around outside of battles.

At that moment, Seigar regretted that fact.

His opponent possessed blond hair, and amethyst-like eyes. She was a Dragon Demon girl with curved horns that looked to be crafted out of amethyst. She was beautiful like a doll. From Seigar's perspective, he could never forget this expressionless girl.

"Laura Ausaurus.....!"

She was the Dragon Demon magician that handed him an appalling defeat in the Dukedom of Tarantos.

"Everyone run away!"

Seigar stepped in front of his servants as he shouted.

"Noonim! I'll hold her off here. Please go to mother!"

He had a heroic expression on his face as he unfolded his Dragon Demon magic.

He wasn't armed, but he was skilled enough to rip apart several dozen regular soldiers with his bare hands. Unlike before, he had learned the forgotten techniques, so he'll be able to buy some time against her.

"Wait a moment, Seigar."

However, Arrieta held him back. She stepped in front of Seigar, who was letting out an imposing presence. She noticed that something was off with Laura's attitude.

"I don't know who she is, but she isn't showing any signs of hostility."

"Mmm.....!"

Seigar also felt this. Like Arrieta, he had received the forgotten techniques from Azell, which included the Gaze Detection technique.

Laura spoke.

“It is as he said.”

“Who are you talking about?”

“He said the Dragon Demon prince will blindly try to fight me, and the Dragon Demon princess will calmly assess the situation. I don’t like admitting this, but it seems he is a teacher that knows his students quite well.....”

“You are talking about my teacher?”

“That’s right.”

At that moment, Kairen appeared from behind Laura. When they saw him, Arrieta and Seigar became confused.

“Teacher? What is going on?”

Seigar remained tense as he spoke. His revered teacher was in front of him, but he couldn't comprehend the situation.

‘Is he perhaps an enemy disguised as my teacher?’

It caused him to question such a scenario.

Kairen smirked.

“I commend you for being wary, but I really am your teacher Kairen Tarantos.”

“You are quite silly. You roped me into doing this boring prank.”

Laura grumbled as she turned away. She completely ignored the situation as she walked towards the inner palace;

Arrieta and Seigar still had no idea what was going on. Kairen spoke to the confused two people.

“I came here, because I need both your help. The king have already given me permission. Follow me.”

Chapter 192 - Transition of Tactics (3)

6

“I didn’t realize you were the legendary hero in the past, and I was discourteous, marquis Azell Karzark.”

Arrieta was courteous as she gave her respects.

This was their first reunion after they parted ways within the Dukedom of Tarantos. It had been four months. The truths that had been revealed to her in that time frame hadn’t been light.

Azell burst out laughing.

“How did you find out?”

“Our enemies gave us the confirmation. The words you threw out as a joke was the truth.”

“You believed their words?”

“I believed them. There was always a voice in the corner of my heart that said it might be possible. It was easy to accept it when I received the confirmation. My brother wasn’t pleased with the information.”

At her words, Azell’s gaze turned towards Seigar. His expression revealed a lot of complex emotions.

He knew Azell was an incredible person. The stuff he had learned from Azell was worth the weight in gold.

However, he had been humiliated by Azell. He acknowledged that Azell was the legendary hero, but he felt trepidation in expressing his respects. It was the pride of a young man.

Azell smirked.

“You don’t have to start that now. Just treat me like before. I am a marquis of the Nadick empire. You are a princess. I’m not ranked as high as you.”

“Hmm. If that is your wish, I’ll do so.”

Arietta suddenly changed her attitude. The change was so fast that Azell had to laugh.

“You became quite imposing since the last time I saw you. You became stronger.”

“Normally, aren’t you supposed to say I became more beautiful?”

“I’m sure some dimwit count from some province will willingly sing your praise. I’ll speak to you as a warrior.”

“Your skill with words remains the same. However, I’m not offended by it. It is none other than the legendary hero Azell Karzark giving me that compliment..”

“I already have the Duke blowing smoke up my ass. I think one is enough. Anyways, let’s stop talking about me now..... Shall we get to the main topic?”

“I heard the short version from my mother.”

Dragon Demon queen Lier was a member of the Guardian Shadows. She retired from the organization after she became queen, but she still maintained her relationship with the other members of the Guardian Shadows. She gave support when needed.

Of course, she hadn’t revealed this fact to her children.

It was because the duty of the royal family was already heavy as it is. Lier hadn’t wanted to draw her two children into the Guardian Shadow’s brutal fight.

However, the situation had changed. The truths, which had been frustratingly veiled to them, were being brought out into the open. The time for a showdown was approaching. It might be the critical conflict that would decide the fate of humanity.

Lier was able to understand this truth when Kairen explained the situation to her. Kairen was now in charge of the Guardian

Shadows, and she decided to deploy her two children.

“An organization made by the Archmage Carlos was fighting the Dragon Demon king worshippers from behind the scenes.... It is quite surprising. However, it doesn’t surprise me that teacher is a member of this organization.”

Kairen hadn’t told Arrieta and Seigar about the Guardian Shadows. However, Arrieta had always felt Kairen had a secret that he wouldn’t share with her. It felt as if he was trying to protect her from something.

Azell spoke.

“I’ll start telling you the specifics. I’ll take questions before I do that.”

Since the two of them were being made into members of the Guardian Shadows, they had a lot to explain. A long conversation ensued.

7

“It feels like I’m dreaming.”

When one was away from a girl going through puberty, even a small amount of time resulted in a big change.

Azell felt this truth anew. It had only been 4 months, but Enora had grown noticeably. Of course, she was still a cute girl that hadn’t lost all her baby fat yet.

Azell asked her a question.

“Why?”

“Mmm. Sir Azell.... Should I call you Marquis Karzark?”

“You can just call me by Sir Azell.”

“I’ll do so. I can’t believe I’m trimming the hair of the legendary hero Azell Karzark.”

It had been awhile since they met, so Enora was trimming Azell’s

hair. When his hair bothered him, he had cut it off with a knife. It seemed his hair had gotten very rough compared to the last time she saw him.

“It isn’t as if this is your first time doing this. I thought you said you didn't think it was a big deal even if I turned out to be Azell Karkark.”

“Y...you should quickly forget that I said such words.”

Enora’s face became red. Azell hadn’t forgotten what she said last time.

“...still, I really was surprised.”

“You don’t look too surprised right now.”

“When I heard it for the first time, I almost fainted .”

In regards to Azell’s identity, Arrieta had received confirmation from the Dragon Demon king’s followers within the Balan forest. Afterwards, she told the truth she had learned to Enora.

At that moment, here eyes had turned round like a rabbit.

“So what did you feel?”

“Mmmm.....”

At Azell’s question, Enora mumbled to herself before she answered him. She had a slightly coy expression on her face.

“I was surprised, but at the same time, I accepted it. It sounded plausible.”

It was the same for Arrieta and Giles. When they realized he was the hero Azell Karzark from the history books, they became surprised. However, it seemed obvious when they heard the truth. They discovered that they were able to accept this fact without much trouble.

“The stories you told me before has more impact on me now.”

“You mean the stories from my era?”

“You really sound like someone from the past when you said that.”

“Mmm. Did I sound like an old man?”

“A little bit.”

Enora let out a playful laughter as she asked him a question.

“I don’t know much about this, but..... I know that you are fighting an important fight like you did in the past.”

Enora was told about Azell’s identity, but she hadn’t been told the specifics of their situation. It was something she shouldn’t know about.

However, she had pieced together information she had gleaned from her past experience. She realized that Azell was fighting a fight that was as important as the Dragon Demon war.

“Unfortunately, you are right.”

“It’s unfortunate?”

“If possible, I wanted to wake up in an era where I wouldn’t have to fight. I wanted a world where girls like Ms Enora wouldn’t have to be scared of the evil Dragon Demon king worshippers.....”

“.....”

She stared at Azell as she asked him a question.

“Sir Azell, what do you want to do after the fight ends?”

“Mmm?”

“I’m curious. What does the legendary hero want to do after the fight ends?”

“Something I want to do.....”

Azell had a dumbfounded expression on his face as if he was taken aback.

He hadn’t thought about this problem before.

After he woke up, fighting was synonymous with his life. He always fought fiercely against the enemies in front of him, so a future with no fight was like an abstract concept to him.

He wanted to live a peaceful life.

He wanted to live a happy life.

He possessed such vague hopes, but he never sat down to plan out what he wanted to do. He had always been too busy.

After thinking over it for a moment, Azell queried her.

“What about Ms Enora?”

“I asked you first.”

“You are asking about my future. That information is a bit pricey.....”

“Hmmph. All right. I’ll let it slide since you are the legendary hero.”

Her voice made it obvious that she was sulking. Azell laughed. Enora spoke.

“I’ll serve the princess until she retires. When she retires, I’ll follow the princes, and I’ll become her personal head maid. I’ll be in a position to order around other maids with just the gesture of my chin. After while, I want to meet someone nice. It is my dream to live a happy life.”

“That sounds a bit... It doesn’t sound like a girl’s dream. It sounds too realistic.”

“Of course. What nonsense are you talking about? Do you realize how much on the job experience I possess? I’ve even thought about becoming the head maid of the royal family. However, the position comes with power, and I don’t like that. I decided to give up on that idea. The princess is the world’s laziest person, and she is good to have as a mistress. I want to be by her side, and I want to be happy as I live free from worldly cares.”

“Your plan in life is so clear. Amazing.”

“It is your turn now, sir Azell.”

“Hmmm. I’ll probably.... I believe I’ll have to fight again.”

Azell let out a bitter laughter as he spoke.

Enora’s eyes turned round.

“Why?”

“There are too many unfinished business that can only be solved through fights.”

When he was posed the question by Enora, he took the opportunity to organize what he had to do.

“When the fight ends.....”

Soon, he had to defeat the revived Dragon Demon king Atein and his subordinates. He would have to end the fight that had continued from the time before his sleep.

If he did that.....

“I want to return to my lands. I want to restore it, so people can live there again. The Bijes kingdom has dispute over my lands, so it won’t be easy. However, it is something that must be done.”

“Ah.....”

At his words, Enora looked as if she knew she had made a faux pas.

The tragedy at the County of Karzark was well known. It was a historical event to her, but she couldn’t imagine the huge wound that was being felt by him.

“Don’t make such an expression, Ms Enora. You didn’t make any mistake.”

“How can you say that when you can’t even see me.....”

Enora was standing behind Azell, since she was trimming his

hair.

Azell asked in a playful manner.

“I can see you?”

“How?”

“Look to the side.”

Enora was frightened to death when she casually looked to her side. Another Azell was there. He was propping up his chin as he stared at her.

“Kyahhhhhhk!”

“Huhk, Ms Enora! That’s dangerous! Scissors! Watch it with the scissors!”

He had used his clone to surprise Enora. Azell hurriedly dodged the scissors being wielded by Enora.

8

Laura was sitting in a rocking chair as she held up a book as if it was a shield. It had the size and thickness of a slab of stone.

It truly had been a long time since she had a break. After the business at the mountain peak of Laus had ended, they had busily moved all over the continent. They had to sleep outside most of the time. This was why the current situation was like a sweet dream. She was resting in a luxurious room, and her needs were being taken care of by the servants.

She suddenly raised her head.

“Azell.”

She felt the presence of Azell within her room. Laura’s eyes turned round.

Laura tilted her head in confusion.

“What?”

“...nothing. You just look like an old lady.”

Laura was wearing a loose gown as she sat on her rocking chair. She was reading a book, while she had a blanket covering her knees.

‘She looks sexy, but why is she giving off a vibe that makes her seems like an old lady or a dame?’

The Dragon Demon Queen had accepted Azell’s party as important guests. This was why skilled maids had worked over Laura. They made her shine.

If she had put on some nice clothes, she would be drop-dead gorgeous.....

‘She is still alluring right now..’

He could see milky cleavage between her loose gown, and her bare feet were showing. The sight of Laura was enough to make his imagination go down odd paths. However, Laura’s attitude was that of an old lady, who was relaxing in her own house.

Laura sounded sullen when she spoke.

“It has been awhile since others took care of me. I just became a bit relaxed.”

She had been an important figure within the Plain of Darkness, so she didn’t feel awkward when being served by others. Azell smirked.

“It is ok to be like this for one day. We are well defended.”

“It is a bit funny that we have to waste my mental power in order to rest like this.”

On the surface, she looked very relaxed. However, Laura was using various magic spells right now.

In the first place, high rank magicians were paranoid about their safety. They couldn’t relax without taking all the precautions. If she wanted to truly relax, she had to lay down magic spells that

would act as barriers. One needed an exhaustive personality if one wanted to deploy all the defensive magic.

Of course, she had also taken measures in regards to the Vitan's Chalice.

It provided the real time location to their enemies, so it was dangerous to have this information known even if they were residing within the palace. The Dragon Demon King worshippers had an absolute rule of working in the shadows. However, Azell's party didn't want to make such a dangerous gamble in regards to how their enemies would behave.

From the perspective of their enemies, Azell was someone they wanted to kill at all costs. They might risk exposing their existence to the public. They might try to destroy the royal palace of a kingdom.

“Have any enemies approached this place?”

Chapter 193 - Transition of Tactics (4)

“Have any enemies approached this place?”

Azell asked as he looked at the corner of the room. A Guardian Shadow suddenly appeared from the bottom of the floor.

「Not yet.....」

“Hmmm. They know that they can locate us at will once again. It seems they’ve given up on spying on us. Are they gathering their main force?”

At that moment, the Vitan’s Chalice was in its summoned state.

It was located at a mountain that was 5 kilometers away from the palace. It had been placed within a barrier. If enemies approached the location, the Guardian Shadows would alert them. It was possible to unsummon the Dragon weapon at any moment.

It was possible thanks to the magic tome Laura inherited from Carlos. Carlos had included all his magical knowledge into the book, and Carlos had made it so that a significant amount of spells could be demonstrated by the magic tome.

For a high ranking magician like Laura, the book was priceless. Normally, magicians treasured their knowledge, and they put a premium on knowledge that was passed down from their ancestors. They also became obsessed with it.. After going through their studies, magicians had to conduct magical experiments for themselves. This was the what being a magician was all about.

Of course, there is a limit to how much new knowledge could be pioneered by a single magician. This was why magicians wanted previously verified knowledge. This allowed them to branch out more.

Moreover, this book was made by Carlos, who was acknowledged to be the greatest prodigy by Atein and the Dragon Demon general. He had researched for a time period that transcended the

limitation of human life. Laura's power was increasing each day just from learning the knowledge from the book.

Suddenly, Laura spoke.

"However, it's weird."

"What is?"

"Why did Carlos Rizester give me this book?"

This book was the essence of Carlos' magical achievement. When Carlos chose to pass on the book, he had given it to Laura instead of Yuren. He did so, while acknowledging the fact that Yuren was his descendant.

Moreover, Carlos had made it so that Laura was the only one that could read the content of the book. Yuren had to receive the knowledge through Laura. She had to read and learn it before she could teach it to Yuren. He had to go through a very inefficient method to receive the knowledge.

"I'm not sure."

For some reason, Azell had a dark expression on his face as he spoke those words. Maybe, it was because the subject of the conversation was Carlos. Laura picked up on this.

"What are you hiding from us?"

"....."

"Did you hold back information in regards to what Carlos told you?"

"I did."

Azell readily nodded his head. It was such a natural response that Laura became surprised.

"What?"

She couldn't understand it.

If it was personal business between the two, she could

understand him not telling others about it. However, when she deciphered the nuanced response from Azell, she realized that he had held back information that would be important to the party.

Azell's face hardened as he spoke.

"These are unverified information. That is why it is hard to speak it out loud."

"Mmm....."

Laura showed signs of being unsatisfied, but she didn't enquire any further.

Azell spoke.

"Aren't you going to press me for the information?"

"I'm sure you had valid reasons for doing so."

Azell heard absolute trust in her words.

Suddenly, it made him think about Carlos. Carlos had been touch when he witness Azell's unwavering trust in him.

He could understand Carlos' feelings a little bit. After being thrown into the far future by himself, it was a big relief to have someone that showed absolute trust in him like this.

"Please tell me one thing."

"Ask me."

"Does that mean there is a chance that Yuren might become our enemy?"

"No."

Azell didn't hesitate as he shook his head from side to side. Laura was taken aback by his answer.

When she heard Azell's story, Laura had guessed that he was talking about the identity and the business related to the Guide. There were too many basis that were pointing towards the Guide.

Carlos wasn't the Guide.

Carlos had revealed some uncomfortable information to Yuren, and he had given Yuren a very unsavory item called the Box of Hope. He even went through the steps of not giving Yuren an item that was considered to be his essence as a magician.

Naturally, her presumptions had a negative tilt to it. There was a possibility that the Guide could be an enemy.

However, Azell was firm in his denial.

Laura was confused. Countless possibilities swirled around inside her head, but she couldn't determine which one was true.

Azell spoke with conviction.

"Yuren won't become our enemy. You can trust in that."

9

Azell's party stayed at the palace of Rulain for one day. They weren't in a position to stay in one place for too long.

They decided one day was enoughn,

It wasn't just Arietta and Seigar. Giles and Boar were brought into the Guardian Shadows, and they created a framework for cooperation. These were people that Azell could trust. The number of people he could trust was small, and he needed as many trusted comrades as he could get right now.

Moreover, it was decided that Arrieta would join the party.

There was a significant amount of consternation until this decision was made. It was because Arrieta and Seigar were insistent that they should be the one to go.

Azell couldn't take both of them. The Dragon Demon princess and the Dragon Demon prince carried out important missions for the Rulain Kingdom. At the very least, one of them would need to continue their work as the front man.

This tug of war ended in Arrieta's victory, because Kairen held up Arrieta's hand.

"I'm judging this objectively. Arrieta has gone through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual, so her potential is higher than yours."

Seigar gritted his teeth at his teacher's cold assessment.

He was frustrated, but he couldn't dispute Kairen's words. After she completed the Dragon Slayer's Ritual, Arrieta's Dragon Demon magic had made a noticeable jump. It was such a large jump that it was almost unbelievable that she was a Dragon Majin.

"Moreover, you have feelings of animosity towards Laura."

He also couldn't deny that truth.

In the end, he backed off as he swallowed back his pride.

Kairen consoled the devastated Seigar.

"You will be staying here, so your responsibility will be immense. You will work with the other Guardian Shadows to cut off our enemy's lifeline. You'll have to risk your own life each time."

"I know."

Azell was the revived legendary hero, who had transcended time. Arrieta would join him to fight for the fate of the world.

The heart of any martial artist that was born in this era would be excited at this prospect. Seigar also felt the same way, so he was greatly disappointed.

"I'm jealous of you, noonim."

Seigar let out a bitter laugh.

10

Kairen was cautioning Arrieta.

"Since you've joined our party, you have to pull your own weight. Your station in life won't grant you any exceptions."

“Of course, I plan on pulling my own weight.”

From a young age, Arrieta was put through harsh trainings by Kairen. It was true that she showed unbelievable amount of laziness in the palace, but she was capable of pulling her own weight in any situation.

“I have important things to teach you, but I’ll have to delay these lesson for a later time.”

“Why?”

“For a while, you’ll have to get used to moving at our speed. We move at a very fast pace.”

At his words, Arrieta’s expression stiffened a little bit. She knew that her teacher boasted an abnormally fast moving ability.

‘Will I be able to keep up?’

In truth, she was worried. After she inherited the forgotten techniques from Azell, she had completed the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual. However, she still wasn’t confident in her abilities.

At the same time, she had a question.

‘They are able to keep up?’

Azell was a given, but how was the other party members able to keep up?

Soon, she was able to acquire the answer to her question. The party had started to move.

“Ha-ah, ha-ah.....”

It had been a long time since she had become exhausted just from running.

She had thought she was well equipped to travel a long distance. She had been trained by Kairen since her childhood. She had climbed the mountains numerous times.

However, the speed of Azell’s party was beyond the limits of

what she had experienced. The more surprising part was.....

“We’ve reduced our speed significantly to match Arrieta’s speed. Will that not cause us trouble?”

“Let us say we do prioritize our speed. The princess won’t be able to adjust to our speed, and if we are ambushed, she won’t have any stamina to fight. In my opinion, that would be a worse outcome....”

“I know why we are in this situation, but it still worries me.”

Kairen and Azell were having this conversation as they prepared their meal.

“Here. Please have some water.”

There was an awkward atmosphere amongst the party members. Arrieta was close with Azell and Kairen. However, she wasn’t sure how to treat Laura, Leticia and Yuren.

Fortunately, Yuren behaved in a pleasant manner. He talked to her first.

“T...thank you.”

“It is only your first day, yet you are doing very well in following us..”

“.....”

It didn’t matter how great one’s skill was. No one traveled in the manner Azell’s party traveled.

They ran on their own two feet to traverse across mountains and lakes. How many would think about running across several hundred kilometers through all types of terrain? If it was a short distance, it was understandable to ignore the terrain. It was extremely odd to travel long distance when a carriage or a horse was available.

Basically, she had not experienced anything like this in her life. She never had to use her abilities in such a manner. However, if

she moved like this for couple days, she thought she would be able to slowly adjust to it.

“Still.... You guys are amazing.”

Laura, Leticia and Yuren weren't showing any signs of fatigue. Arrieta was proud of her ability, so she felt her unyielding spirit rise up.

“May I call you by Ms Letica?”

“Please take out the Ms. You can just call me by Leticia.”

Leticia answered in a blunt manner. It seemed she didn't care if the other person was a princess. She wasn't going to show Arrieta any deference.

However, Arrieta didn't get mad as she asked a question in return.

“May you just call me by Arrieta?”

“...hmmm.”

Leticia's expression turned peculiar.

“As a royal, I thought you guys place much importance on your rank. You guys stake your life on it.”

“You can think of me as being a bit strange. Other royals aren't like me.”

“I see. Then I'll do as you say, Arrieta.”

At her words, Arrieta had a peculiar expression on her face. Leticia was puzzled by her reaction, so she asked Arrieta a question.

“What's wrong?”

“...Ah. This is the first time I've experienced this.”

“What are you talking about?”

“A woman of similar age as me just called me by my name. When

I was young, some called me by a false name. I've just been called by my real name... Hmm. It is a strange feeling, but it isn't as if I don't like it."

Arrieta nodded her head as she mumbled to herself. When Leticia saw this, she smirked without realizing it.

"You are a strange princess."

"Should I take that as a complement?"

"I think so."

In truth, Leticia hadn't like the idea when she heard that Arrieta was joining their party. She had already formed a strong bond with her party members. Someone was going to intrude into their party dynamic. Of course, she wouldn't welcome it.

She became more opposed to the idea when she found out that the person joining their party was a princess. However, some of her trepidation went away when she saw Arrieta's attitude.

Arrieta decided to talk to Laura next.

"Ms Laura....."

"I'm throwing this out there just in case....."

Before Arrieta could speak, Laura cut her off with an expressionless face.

"Please do not add Aunsarus to my name. I've thrown that name away."

"Hmmm. It is an unwelcome name even for me, so I welcome the suggestion."

"You can just call me by Laura. I'll call you by Arrieta."

"Thank you."

Arrieta looked to be enjoying herself. After being taught by Kairen starting from her childhood, she had always lived her life as a princess. The current experience was stimulating her in new

ways.

After a short meal, Kairen gave an explanation.

“As I’ve explained yesterday, we are going to go around destroying the waypoints of the Road of Emptiness.

Laura, Leticia and Yuren consolidated their information, and they were able to name a total of 222 locations.

“...there are a lot of them.”

Arrieta was surprised. However, if she thought about it, this continent was large. If there weren’t that many, the Dragon Demon king worshippers wouldn’t be able to suddenly appear and disappear like they had been over the years.

“Currently, there are 204 of them left.”

If they included the ones destroyed by the Keepers of Prophecy, they had destroyed 18 waypoints.

It hadn’t been easy fights. The Plain of Darkness had set up defensive measures, and they had to charge into the teeth of the defense. Moreover, all the Dragon Demon king worshippers in the region were called into the fight. There were cases where several groups of the Guardian Shadows were almost wiped out. This was why Kairen transitioned into being extremely careful in directing their attacks.

First, he sent in the Guardian Shadows to check the response of their enemy. If there was a high ranking official that they couldn’t handle, the attack was aborted.

Of course, Azell’s party was the exception. Azell’s party only had to avoid Almarick and Reygus.

Arrieta was dismayed after hearing Kairen’s explanation.

“We are talking about the legendary hero and the Dragon Demon Generals. It feels unreal. They are the enemies we’ll have to fight but.....”

“When they approach us, they’ll snap you right out of such feelings.”

Kairen snorted.

Chapter 194 - Message (1)

1

Kayalia didn't have a real body.

This was true long before the Dragon Demon war. She was from an extinct tribe. She was a 1st generation Dragon Demon, who had been revered as a goddess.

Since she have lived through multiple lives, her history was longer than any nation in existence. In front of her, even the Dragon Demon generals were like children to her.

However, Kayalia didn't treat herself as being an ancient being.

It was true that she had the memories of her past life. From the moment she was born without parents, she had walked this world, and she had memories of living lives as several different beings.

The problem was the fact that it really didn't feel like her life.

It was like an adult trying to remember the memories from childhood. The thought process and actions of the being she used to be felt foreign to her. When she was reborn in a new body, she lived life with a completely different personality. She repeatedly had an awakening, but she always maintained a part of her current personality. It would be strange if that didn't happen.

Whenever Kyalia experience her past life, her personality changed a little bit. She had also experienced life as a human, so it was unclear if Kayalia remained the same person.

Right now, she.....

<Why are you acting?>

-What do you mean?

At Reygus' question, Kayalia tilted her head in confusion.

She was like a girl from a noble family. She was elegant as she

drank her tea.

It was impossible for her to do this. She didn't have a real body, so how was she able to drink the tea placed on the table?

However, she was doing it right now. She savored the smell of the tea as she drank it. Of course, every item was half-translucent like her. It was an illusion.

<It really looks like you are enjoying the tea.>

Reygus questioned her about this.

It was possible to create an illusion with the power of magic. A magician could probably hold up an illusion, and one could also pretend to enjoy a cup of tea.

However, Kayalia didn't look like she was acting.

She was an illusion, yet she looked as if she was enjoying her tea as she sat on top of her chair. No matter how he looked at it, her actions were believable. It was as if she was holding up items that had weight and texture. She looked to be enjoying the smell of the tea, and he was getting an impression that warm liquid was traveling down her throat. Everything was so matter of fact.

-I'm really enjoying it?

<How is that possible?>

Reygus couldn't comprehend her answer.

This was why Kayalia changed the topic.

-Oppa, there is something I miss when my body became like this.

<What is it?>

-It's the fact that I can't touch anything.

Kayalia reached out her hand towards Reygus as she spoke. Her hand went through Reygus' body.

It was odd. Normally, a ghost didn't have a true body. However, this was only true when one was talking about the physical body.

When one was talking about it in terms of spiritual level, they possessed a presence. If a spirit tried to pass through a someone, the spirit would feel resistance and pain.

As an Undead, Reygus' spiritual presence was very strong. If a phantom or an evil spirit tried to charge into him, they would be repelled. It would be like running into a steel wall.

So how did Kayalia just pass through him?

<Aren't you a ghost? How can you pass through my body like that?> -I'm an illusion.

Kayalia let out a bitter laugh.

-Before I died, I wasn't part of the Great Darkness. My past lives weren't connected to the Great Darkness. It was done through my own personal technique.

When Kayalia died, she hadn't prepared her revival technique.

She could no longer treat her past lives as her own.

The revival technique had revealed itself to be unstable. She couldn't continuously live her new life as the same person. If she couldn't do that, she had no reason to cling to her revival. This was what Kayalia had thought.

When she was dying, the will left behind by Atein within the Great Darkness was heard by Kayalia.

-When I agreed to the king's request, I created a new pact with him. In the distant future, I'll be awakened as a part of the Great Darkness when the king's revival nears.

<Hmmm. I'm not sure what that has anything to do with the question I asked.> -I'm getting to the main point now. As I've said before, I threw a tantrum saying I don't want to become an Undead like oppa.

<You said you wanted him to respect the feelings of a girl.> - That's right. That is why I decided to manifest as a illusion in the

real world when the king made me part of the Great Darkness.

<So you really are an illusion?>

-That's right. My body is in the Great Darkness like oppa's body. The only thing that can be manifested in this world is an illusion. However, that doesn't mean there is no purpose to my presence. I have the role of being an anchor.

<Anchor?>

-I observe the world, and this illusion can act as an anchor. It allows the manifestation of my powers. If this criteria isn't met, it would be impossible for me to involve myself with the workings of this world.

<I am having a hard time understanding what you're saying.> When Reygus started to scratch his head, Kayalia giggled.

-You don't have to understand it. I'm just an illusion, but I'm able to converse with oppa.

<You can use magic too?>

-Yes.

<That still doesn't answer why you are able to drink tea.> -It is simple. In the Great Darkness, there are countless fragments of thoughts. There are experiences and thoughts of others. I'm there.

Kayalia was an illusion that wasn't affiliated with this world. This was why she couldn't touch anything.

Kayalia was part of the world called the Great Darkness now. Anything within the Great Darkness was real to her.

Both Kayalia and Reygus existed within the Great Darkness. However, Kayalia chose to stay within the Great Darkness. Reygus chose to step out into the world within the body of an Undead.

-That is why I'm sensitive to the problem more so than you.

<Are you talking the problem I spoke to you about?>

-Yes.

Reygus spoke. He knew that he won't be able to be revived again if his body was completely destroyed.

Kayalia was closer to the Great Darkness than Reygus. That is why she was able to feel the problem more sharply.

-The pillars are being destroyed.

<What pillars?>

-These are the pillars making up the Great Darkness. It isn't just one that was destroyed. I'm the only one that sensed it, but another pillar is being destroyed right now.... This will create a great imbalance in the Great Darkness.

2

The activities of the Dragon Demon king worshippers were extremely reduced.

They had been causing confusion all over the continent, but they had no choice to abandon their political maneuverings. Even their lowest ranked political agents were called in to defend the waypoints of the Road of Emptiness.

This didn't mean the confusion caused by them were gone.

Of course, there were problems that arose even when things were supposed to settle down. The Dragon Demon king worshippers had already set the fire, so the intense conflagration of society continued to occur.

This was the case in the Dailan kingdom.

To be precise, their problem stemmed from the fact that the king was killed before the heir could be chosen. In the end, a civil war had occurred.

The civil war was getting so intense that the members of the Guardian Shadows affiliated with the Dailan kingdom couldn't do anything. No, the members had to stand by their political

affiliation and they had to fight each other.

As members of the Guardian Shadow, they were supposed to protect humanity by fighting the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

However, they were also nobles of the Dailan kingdom. They had to choose a new king before they could end the civil war. They had to bring stability to their kingdom.

“...I’m not sure we can interfere with matters involving another country.”

Kairen grumbled as he shook off the blood from his sword.

The corpses of Dragon Demon king worshippers were strewn about, and the Undeads were ruthlessly destroyed. They were the forces placed here to protect this location by the Plain of Darkness.

Azell and his party didn’t have high hopes that the Guardian Shadows of Dailan would mobilize to help them. In the end, Azell’s party had to attack the waypoints.

Leticia spoke.

“From their perspective, they did the best they could do, so I can’t fault them too much.”

“I’m not complaining about them. I’m complaining about the situation itself.”

The members of the Guardian Shadows in the Dailan Kingdom couldn’t participate in battles, but they had done much to support Azell’s party.

They gave Azell’s party places to rest. They also sent supplies and healers to them. Since Azell’s party was continuously moving as they fought, their help was invaluable.

Each member of Azell’s party was strong enough to make their name known even if they were back in the Dragon Demon war. However, they possessed living bodies. They couldn’t free

themselves from fatigue and wounds.

After the party entered into the Dailan kingdom for a fortnight, they were able to destroy nine waypoints.

If there were easy fights, there were also dangerous fights. Leticia, Arrieta and Yuren were wounded in different battles. They had to sit out one battle each.

‘Our fatigue has to be taken into account. For a while, we’ll have to avoid fighting. We have to focus on rest.’

Kairen came to that decision.

The biggest burden possessed by the party was the Vitan’s Chalice.

They couldn’t rest in one place, because of the Vitan’s Chalice. If they stayed in one place too long, Almarick and Reygus would lead their elite forces against Azell’s party.

Kairen asked a question towards the nearest Guardian Shado/

“Please check if it is possible for Azell to contact us.”

In the next moment, Kairen got his answer.

「I’m still fighting.」

“We finished faster than him? I guess that location was much more dangerous than expected. Let us retreat for now, and we’ll wait for Azell to contact us.”

Azell and Laura were moving separate from the other party members.

They were moving separately, but their objective wasn’t the destruction of the waypoints. Their objective was a bit more important.

Azell contacted Kairen after three hours. The Guardian Shadow spoke with Azell’s voice.

「We were successful.」

“It seems you had to fight a very hard battle. You took a very long time.”

「Atein’s monsters were placed here as guards. They were quite annoying.」

The goal of Azell and Laura was to destroy the pillars of the Great Darkness. These locations possessed transcendent beings that Atein had been unable to kill.

Carlos had found out where all the pillars were located when he became affiliated with the Great Darkness.

These beings might become unsealed like Belrun, so Azell had no choice. He had to destroy them. When he came to this judgement, he decided to move independent of his party. He only took Laura along with him, because he predicted he would need a magician.

When he arrived, he found out that the seal wasn’t left unprotected by Atein.

“You were able to destroy it without suffering any loss, but it seems it would be better if we move together.”

「I agree. I underestimated them too much.」

Azell readily admitted his mistake, then he asked a question.

「How did it go on your side?」

“We were able to neatly wrap things up here. We suffered no injuries, and the loss to the Guardian Shadows were minimal.”

「I’m glad.」

“The problem is....”

Kairen decided to speak to Azell about a problem that had been weighing on his mind.

“What do you think?”

「I believe the duke’s judgement is correct. We need the rest, and we need time to be able to teach the Dragon Soul to the princess.」

It had been 20 days since Arrieta had joined the party.

In this time frame, Kairen had been trying to teach the Dragon Soul to Arrieta. However, they were too busy fighting and moving. This was why it was difficult for Arrieta to make any progress.

Reshoo was the founder of the Dragon Soul, and even he needed over a month to teach Kairen and Leticia. Moreover, they were able to focus on their training, since their enemies wouldn't attack them within the forest. They were also able to avoid major pitfalls thanks to Saibein's ability, so their progress had been fast.

In comparison, Arrieta's environment was too poor to learn the Dragon Soul.

“For the near future, we'll avoid battles. We can decrease our traveling speed as we rest.....”

「I just had a good idea.」

Azell cut off Kairen's words. Kairen was puzzled as he asked Azell a question.

“What's your idea?”

「I'll travel with Laura for a while. Then you guys will be able to rest.」

“Mmm. What about you?”

「I have the Storm Dragon's Wing and the Crying Phoenix. We'll summon the Vitan's Chalice in a distance location, and when our enemies come to confront us, we'll dodge them. If it is just one person, I can move with her.」

“Understood. Let's do that.”

Kairen decided to follow Azell's suggestion.

Chapter 195 - Message (2)

3

Laura was exhausted as she sat in front of the campfire. She had her eyes closed with an ashen face. After talking to Kairen through the Guardian Shadow, Azell spoke with a weak voice.

“I’m sorry.”

“I should be the one saying that to you.”

“.....”

“I’m the one that made the wrong judgement. You don’t have any reasons to apologize to me. I’m sorry.”

Azell gave an apology.

The monsters, who were left behind by Atein to protect the sealed transcendent being, were terrifying. Azell and Laura were able to defeat them after a fierce battle. However, Laura had used too much magical energy, so she was exhausted.

Azell was also tired, and he was injured. Azell had become injured protecting the exhausted Laura.

Azell didn’t relay any of this through his communication. He wanted his comrades to rest in peace. He wanted to take care of his comrades.

Laura spoke.

“If I didn’t possess the Vitan’s Chalice.....”

“If so, we would have had to fight a foe equipped with the Vitan’s Chalice. You shouldn’t place unnecessary blame on yourself.”

Azell unfastened his cloak, and he placed it around Laura’s shoulder.

“You’ll feel better soon. The Guardian Shadows will keep a lookout. We’ll rest for an hour here. You should take a quick nap. I

think you need sleep more so than meditation.”

“What about you? You should be.....”

“I’m all right. I’m built much sturdier than you.”

In truth, Azell’s wound wasn’t light. There was a large cut on his left side, and couple ribs were cracked. He had used his Spirit Order to stop the bleeding, but he would need proper healing.

Still, Azell wanted Laura to rest first.

“I want you to sleep for now. If you don’t recover enough to move on your own, it’ll become troublesome.”

“...yes.”

She had abused her mind and Energy Pulse as she consumed her magical energy. Sleep washed over her as she felt a chill. Laura swallowed the words she was about to say, and she went to sleep for a brief amount of time.

When she opened her eyes again, Azell was putting out the campfire.

“Are you awake?”

“Yes. When you started putting out the campfire, I assumed it was time for us to move.”

It seemed she used a spell that was activated when a prerequisite was triggered.

She had slept for a short amount of time, but she had recovered significantly. Laura queried him.

“What did you do?”

“I talked with the duke once again after you fell asleep.”

The party had destroyed the waypoints of the Road of Emptiness for the past 40 days. They had travelled all over the continent. They had fought at an incredible pace. They had traveled several hundred kilometers per day, so they hadn’t taken any breaks. Even

Azell's condition was deteriorating.

They had worked in concert with the members of the Guardian Shadows to destroy 31 waypoints of the Road of Emptiness.

Their enemies still had 191 waypoints left. They still had enough waypoints to travel the entirety of the continent.

"We've significantly decreased their mobility, but..... We didn't take any breaks as we made the big push. That is why we are slowly hitting our limit. We'll have to spend a good amount of time on fixing ourselves.."

"How long is a good amount of time?"

"If nothing drastic happens, it should take a fortnight."

They would have to leave the battles to the members of Guardian Shadows in each country. They would have to focus on supporting them with intelligence.

Laura's expression darkened.

"The others will be able to rest, but you....."

"We'll be fine."

Azell went out of his way to use the word 'we'.

"We've worked diligently, and as a result, there are huge gaps in the Road of Emptiness. We'll pick one of those regions."

"What about the Albatan forest?"

"That'll be our last resort. We've already used that place as a refuge once. If we repeat our actions again, it might not matter that we are in the Albatan forest. The Plain of Darkness might risk a war with the Albatan forest. We can't discount that possibility"

If that happened, Albatan couldn't guarantee the safety of Azell's party. Albatan was the leader of the forest, and he would have to make decisions based on politics. If he made a level headed judgement, there was a high probability that Albatan would chase

Azell's party out of the forest.

-Awaken Dragon Weapon! Crying Phoenix!

An enormous bird made out of fire appeared in front of Azell. It was as big as a house, and it looked if it was capable of carrying several people on its back.

In fact, it was capable of doing just that.

“Let's go.”

He got on the fiery phoenix. No one in their sane mind would want to get on it, yet Azell and Laura didn't hesitate as they mounted the phoenix. When the two of them got on, the phoenix beat its huge wings as it flew into the air.

In a flash, the ground dropped away. Laura asked him a question.

“Was it like this during the Dragon Demon war?”

“What do you mean by your question?”

“The whole world is on our side, yet we don't have any refuge we can use.”

“No. It was a war where the allied forces were putting up a fight against invaders. It was a different situation than the one we face right now.”

Azell's gaze headed towards the darkening sky.

It was as Laura had said. The Dragon Demon king worshippers were the enemy of world. This was why the whole world was on Azell's side.

Still, they didn't have any place where they could rest in peace. Their enemies were on the defensive, yet they had to travel at a pace where their enemies couldn't catch up with them.

“If Almarick and Reygus didn't exist, we could hole up anywhere.....”

Those two were the problem. Aside from Azell's party, no one

could contend with Amarick and Reygus. To be precise, Azell was the only one that could fight on an even ground with them.

When the two of them woke up, Laura couldn't help but worry about other hidden forces that might wake up within the Plain of Darkness.

“Still, this fight has an end. The pressure on us lessens everytime we destroy a waypoint.”

“It doesn't erase the fact that our enemies know our location.”

“Aren't we coming up with some ways to counter that? As I've told you earlier, I don't want you to blame yourself. It is better than watching a city with tens of thousands of people being evaporated into ashes by the Vitan's Chalice..”

“.....”

It was as he said. It wouldn't have mattered if it was a regular Dragon weapon. The Vitan's Chalice was too dangerous to hand over to their enemies.

However, it was also true that the Vitan's Chalice was the root of many of their troubles. That's why they had thought about destroying the Vitan's Chalice....

‘There is no guarantee that they won't be able to summon it again even if we destroy it.’

The Dragon weapons of the Dragon Demon generals were affiliated with the Great Darkness. If its owner was dead, it would return to a fixed location. This occurred even if one gave up rights to the weapon.

The problem arose from the fact that Carlos had been unable to decipher the structure of this system.

Would the Dragon weapon cease to exist if it was destroyed? Or would its essence be returned to the Great Darkness? Would it be recovered as time passes?

If it was the latter, it would be the worst possible outcome.

In the case of Azell, he had a reason to be pessimistic in regards to the possibility of Vitan's Chalice being restored. He had recovered his Sky Splitter.

In the Balan forest, he had gone through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual with an Earth Dragon. He had thought his Sky Splitter had ceased to exist. However, he had found the fragments of the Sky Splitter within his Energy Pulse, and he was able to restore it.

In the end, Azell had no choice, but to maintain the status quo.

Azell spoke.

"It is true that the distinction between allies and enemies were much more simpler during the Dragon Demon war. That part was easier."

The Dragon Demon king's army had attacked the world as an army of conquerors. In turn, humanity coalesced into one to resist against the attackers.

Of course, there had been a lot of problems. There were political problems, and various forces fought for their own profits. These were the types of problems that had been present at the time, but it wasn't as complicated what they faced right now.

'Since things have turned out like this, it might be better to reveal the existence of our enemies. What if we make it everyone's fight instead of a fight between the Guardian Shadows and the Dragon Demon king worshippers?'

It wasn't as if Azell's party hadn't thought about this before. However, they decided the collateral damage from a head to head fight would be too large.

Unlike the days of the Dragon Demon war, the continent was divided into seven kingdoms.

The Guardian Shadows transcended nationality. Their mission

was to fight the Dragon Demon king worshippers. If the Dragon Demon king worshippers were revealed, the existence of the Guardian Shadows would be revealed too. It would create many problems.

This was why Azell's party hadn't gotten involved with the civil war inside the Dailan kingdom. As a noble from another country, Kairen's involvement would cause an incredible amount of backlash.

It would have been great if everyone could cooperate with each other for the sole purpose of fighting the Dragon Demon king worshippers. It would have been great if the world was that simple.

Since the world could never be like that, they had no choice but to fight in this manner.

On the other hand, the Dragon Demon king worshippers didn't want to reveal themselves to the world either. It was a fear that was developed during the Dragon Demon war.

They were afraid of their existence becoming common knowledge. They no longer had the power to fight against the entire world.

“We have no choice but to nudge the world at a slow pace.”

Their plate was already full taking care of the chaos caused by the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

Still, this didn't mean they weren't going to do anything. They possessed operatives like the Dragon Demon Queen of the Rulain kingdom. The organization called the Guardian Shadows kept itself hidden as they carried out their work of eradicating their enemies.

“If possible, I want to finish them before they make themselves known to the world. I don't want a repeat of the Dragon Demon war.”

Azell liked this peaceful era.

Of course, it wasn't as if the whole world was peaceful. However, he was able to find peace in this world.

He didn't want the entire world to suffer under a war. He didn't want the world to go crazy again. He didn't want children to be born into the world where it would be hard for them to imagine a world without a war.

"I want girls like Ms Enora to live in a peaceful world. I don't want them to even know about the war until it has already come to an end."

Laura quipped.

"...you sound like an old man."

"Are you saying that as a revenge for what I said to you before? However, I cannot refute your words."

Azell burst out into laughter.

4

As each waypoints of the Road of Emptiness were destroyed, the freedom of movement enjoyed by the Dragon Demon king worshippers were decreased significantly.

When traveling to a place, it mattered that they were able to appear in front of their destination. The difference in what they could do differed significantly if they had to travel an hour to reach a destination. If the Road of Emptiness could be used continuously, it might not have mattered. However, it took time to restart the gate, and the number of forces that could be move through them was limited. Their effectiveness decreased noticeably.

When problems occurred, it was getting progressively harder to gather all their forces in one place. This was why each waypoint had defensive forces stationed there. They were no longer on the offensive, and the burden they had to shoulder also grew.

Moreover.....

“It is as if they can read our mind.”

The biggest problem was the fact they they were falling behind in terms of information. Kieren had on a serious expression as he pointed out this fact..

In the beginning, the Guardian Shadows attacked blindly. This was why the Demon King worshippers were able to smash them into pieces in several occasions. However, at some point, their tactic had changed.

First, they attacked a waypoint to induce additional forces from the Plain of Darkness to be sent in. If someone that they couldn't handle showed up, they would give up on the battle. They cleanly cut their losses as they retreated.

Niberis asked him a question.

“What if it is their plan to attack different locations at the same time?”

Kieren and Niberis weren't dispatched amongst the normal defense force stationed at the waypoints. They acted as support. They were only inserted when there was a problem.

In the beginning, the two of them smashed their enemies, and they made glorious contributions. However, at some point, their enemies retreated everytime the two of them were dispatched. They were coming up empty.

Currently, they had already used the Road of Emptiness to come here, so their hands were tied. While they were waiting, another waypoint was being attacked.

It was obvious that their enemies had created a list of dangerous figures they would avoid. Moreover, the Guardian Shadows possessed capabilities similar to the Great Darkness where they could assess a given situation in real time. They were fighting the battles in an organic manner.

Kieren frowned.

“That’s it. They attacked as if they waited for us to arrive here. It seems the nearby forces were mobilized, but.....”

“Where’s the nearest waypoint?”

“It is 32 kilometers away. We won’t be able to make it in time..”

When a waypoint of the Road of Emptiness was used once, it needed 10 minutes to recharge.

Even if they waited for the waypoint to recover in 10 minutes, they wouldn’t be sent directly to the waypoint that was being attacked. If things were going poorly, the troops would have already been sent from the Plain of Darkness.

Niberis spoke.

“They really are focused on decreasing the density of waypoints.”

The Guardian Shadows weren’t just decreasing the number of waypoints. It was clear that they were attacking the waypoints as they stuck to a game plan.

The game plan was to to maximize the distance between each waypoints.

The Guardian Shadows were steadily cutting away at their mobility. This was what Kairen had aimed for.

“We just have to hope that they can last. Our waypoint will recover faster, so when the other side recovers, we can immediately move.....”

“Sir Baldazark!”

Suddenly, Niberis desperately yelled out loud. At the same time, she activated her defensive magic.

Gwah-gwa-gwahng!

Chapter 196 - Message (3)

“Sir Baldazark!”

Suddenly, Niberis let out a desperate shout. At the same time, she unleashed her spell.

Ggah-gwah-gawhng!

An unbelievable amount of thunder was sent towards them from a long distance away, and it exploded.

Kieren’s eyes opened wide in shock.

“Where the hell did that.....”

Niberis had created a Magic Eye that relayed information to her. She had done this as a precaution, and she was observing a radius of 3 kilometers. An attack had been sent from farther out.

On top of that, they were in a mountainous region. If the attacker was farther out than 3 kilometers, one wouldn’t be able to secure a clear view of them. So how did someone manage to pull off this attack?

-Rise Dragon weapon! Bleeding Star!

As they asked such questions to themselves, they immediately summoned their Dragon weapons. The two of them had faced several life threatening situations in the past. They wouldn’t be taken unawares anymore.

Even if they hadn’t been careless, their minds couldn’t make sense of what had happened. They were caught off guard. It couldn’t be helped.

Paht!

Kieren’s eyes widened.

Something had penetrated their multi-layered barrier magic. As if that wasn’t bad enough, something pierced through his

shoulder.

‘T....this is.....!’

Kieren realized the identity of the attack.

‘Dragon weapon: Underworld's Marksman!’

It was the Dragon weapon that had critically wounded the Dragon Demon general Baldazark during the Dragon Demon war. Kieren was Baldazark’s descendent. Of course, he knew about this weapon.

“Azell Karzark!”

The lightning strike in the beginning was bait. On the surface, it looked like a poor move that would cause unnecessary vigilance in one’s opponent. However, the Underworld Ruler’s Marksman was used right afterwards, and they were taken by surprise.

Kieren endured the pain as he pushed his body forward. The blood coming out of his wound sparked as it turned into flames that surrounded his body.

Paht! Pah-baht! Pah-bah-baht!

The bolts sent by the Underworld’s Marksman hit the flame. After Baldazark almost died from this weapon, he had developed a barrier spell that would counter this weapon.

The magic consumption was extremely high, and it had a critical flaw of increasing his susceptibility to all other attacks. However, it was better than being killed by the Underworld’s Marksman. Unfortunately, this defensive method could only be used on himself.

“Koo-ahk!”

His subordinates that were outside the range of his barrier were dying. Kieren grinded his teeth.

“Shit! I want everyone to retreat inside for now!”

They were being sniped by something that defied reason. It was dangerous to be in a wide-open space. With this in mind, Kieren retreated into the cave.

Niberis followed after him. However, she felt puzzled by what had occurred.

‘Why were none aimed for me? Why?’

Not a single bolt from the Underworld’s Marksman had been aimed at her. Half of the bolts were focused on Kieren, and the rest were aimed at her subordinates.

Soon, Niberis was successful in locating Azell.

‘Over there!’

Unexpectedly, Azell wasn’t putting in too much effort in hiding himself. He just used an Invisibility technique that discouraged his enemies from seeing him through sight.

‘We are at a disadvantage right now. We’ll have to retreat for now....’

She was having such thoughts when her surrounding suddenly warped.

“Niberis!”

Kieren extended his hand in surprise, but he was a beat too late.

Niberis’ figure disappeared as if she was a heat shimmer in the distance.

Ggwah-gwah-gwahng!

Afterwards, violent lightning impacted the cave. The cave entrance collapsed.

5

In a flash, Niberis realized that she had been transported a long distance using the Dimensional Distortion.

Niberis knew of only one person that could pull this off.

“Laura!”

Vitan’s Chalice could use Dimensional Distortion to connect point A to point B. It was Laura’s specialty. She could use this trick to pull anyone in front of her. It was an unpleasant experience, but it was true that Laura had used this move to save her from being killed by Azell.

Still, that was the past. It was clear that Laura was an enemy.

‘I’m still within 1 kilometers.’

Niberis quickly assessed her situation.

Thankfully, the Vitan’s Maze hadn’t been used. This was why she was pulled only a distance of a kilometer. She was also able to sense that she was cut off from Kieren and her allies when the cave entrance was brought down.

If Kieren used his ability, he would be able to come out of the cave in short order. However, Niberis wasn’t confident that she could last that long against Azell’s party.

‘If I had the time to use the Queen of Darkness....’

She decided to quickly summon her Book of Darkness. She had to use the great magic called the Queen of Darkness to amplify her ability. However, she wasn’t given the time to use it.

Puh-buh-buh-buhng!

Unfortunately, her enemies wouldn’t give her the opportunity to use such a move. She didn’t even have time to say anything to Laura, who was in front of her. Lightning rained down from all directions towards her.

‘Sky Splitter!’

Azell had initiated his attack.

The lightning was like a mixture of flame and electricity. The lightning hammered on top of her barrier spell. It felt as if dozen magicians were attacking her at the same time. Niberis could only

focus on her defense.

‘If I cannot endure this.... This place will be my grave.’

When she hardened her defense, she started bouncing around the air like a ball. She didn’t have the luxury to assess her surrounding. She put all her efforts in not losing her concentration.

Soon, she realized that she was high up in the sky.

The lightning that had been mindlessly impacting on her barrier was gone in a flash. Azell had halted his attack.

Soon, she heard Azell’s voice.

“Niberis, will you have a conversation with me?”

“...what underhanded scheme are you plotting this time?”

Niberis couldn’t comprehend his motive, so she furrowed her brows.

When she looked down, she saw that the ground was very far away. Even as a high rank magician, she had never climbed up to such elevation.

‘Did he intentionally bring me up here?’

She was chilled with fright.

Basically, Azell had used his Sky Splitter without a single ounce of killing intent behind it. He didn’t given Niberis the chance to counterattack, and he had separated her completely from her allies without injuring her. It had all been done for this purpose.

Azell shrugged his shoulders.

“I don’t like the fact that I have to go through all these annoying steps to have a conversation with you. However, I made a promise, so I have no choice.”

“You promised? To whom did you make this promise with?”

“The Simpleton Prince.... I meant to say your father. I made a

promise with Saibein. ”

“.....”

Niberis’ eyes widened.

However, her surprise lasted only a moment. In a short amount of time, her expression calmed.

Azell queried her.

“You don’t seem as surprised as I thought you would be.”

“If my father was alive, I had a feeling my father would run across you.”

In the past, Niberis had tracked down Saibein’s whereabouts. She had gone into the Albatan forest. However, she had experienced something unbelievable in there. A water dragon of unknown origin had delivered the Book of Darkness to her.

From that moment on, Niberis was sure that Saibein was alive. She didn’t know why he wouldn’t meet her, but she knew he had his reasons for doing so. She had swallowed her disappointment.

“However.....”

A determined resolve appeared in Niberis’ eyes.

“It seems you plan on deceiving me by trying to sell information about my father to me. I want you to give up on such empty dreams.”

There was a wide river of grudge separating Azell and Niberis. It wasn’t a relationship that could be salvaged.

‘I told myself I wouldn’t become careless, yet....’

She thought herself to be pathetic. It was the same in the past when she had tried to attack Azell’s party. She had been helpless as she was walked all over by his party.

Azell let out a bitter laugh.

“I expected such a reaction. However, I did make a promise.

Therefore, I don't think it would be right for me to kill you just because you cannot drop your hostility towards me. Just listen to me for now. Then I'll send you back alive."

"You continue to show contempt by looking down upon me. How much before you are satisfied?"

"I don't have any plans on putting in any effort to look down on you . It would be much cleaner for me to kill you when the opportunity presents itself. If I wanted to, I could have killed you 100 times over since I've arrived here."

"You bastard.....!"

Niberis' body shook from anger.

An acute sense of humiliation washed over her. On the other hand, she was a high rank magician, so she tried to coolly assess the situation.

She didn't want to admit it, but it was as Azell had said.

'I'm sorry, Duran. I will not be able to take revenge for you. I found myself lacking.'

Niberis apologized to Duran, who had died for her. However, his presence still lived within her heart, so she wouldn't give up even if the fight was insurmountable. She couldn't withdraw her grudge just because she was curious about her father. Her pride wouldn't let her do so.

'As expected, this is how she'll respond?'

Azell could read Niberis' resolve. She showed no signs of compromising.

There was no way she could win this fight. Her life was being threatened, and she wanted to know about her father.....

These were the reasons why she should withdraw her grudge against Azell. She should accept the demand for a conversation, but she wasn't going to humiliate herself by choosing that option.

Her pride was strong and upright like a blade.

“I kind of like that about you.”

He had to deliver Saibein’s message to her. From his perspective, it was a frustrating situation.

On the other hand, he could understand and sympathize with her intentions.

Azell and his comrades in the Dragon Demon war had felt the same thing as her. The Dragon Demon king’s army held an absolute edge against humanity. The Dragon Demon king’s army threatened their lives to forcefully forge a deal with humanity. However, Azell and his comrades never agreed to such terms.

“I have no choice. I’ll make you listen with my strength.”

“You won’t be able to accomplish that easily.”

“Unless you immediately take your own life....”

She had opened her Book of Darkness as she was about to cast a spell. Her heart lurched when she suddenly heard Azell’s voice from behind her.

“You have no choice but to hear me out.”

Lightning exploded against her barrier. Niberis’ body shot upwards.

‘Is it Incarnation?!’

This was one of Azell’s moves that instilled extreme fear in her. She had experienced it ad nauseam.

She had experienced it before, but she had no way of countering it. Several dozen forms of Azell surrounded Niberis, and a storm-like attack was sent towards her.

Gwah-gwah-gwah-gwahng! Gwah-gwahng!

It was the same situation that had sent her up to this elevation. It was such a fierce attack that she could only defend against it.

No, she was in a worse situation.

‘T...this is.....!’

The Sky Splitter had changed itself into several thousand strands of light, and they were attacking Niberis’ barrier from all sides.

While this was going on, another fatal attack was being used against her.

Azell was using his Moon sword to eat away at her magical energy.

Normally, she would immediately try to counter such a move. However, she was having a hard time just lasting against Azell’s bombardment. Her barrier was slowly decaying, yet she couldn’t do anything about it.

“Do you now realize why I took the trouble to bring you up here?”

It felt as if she was going to lose her sense of hearing as the explosive sounds assaulted her ears, yet Azell’s voice could be heard clearly. It was as if he was whispering his words right next to her ears.

‘Do you think I’ll take this lying down!’

Niberis used her hidden card. She hadn’t used it, because of Laura. However, Laura wasn’t present in this elevation.

The Book of Darkness let out a wave of terrifying Dragon Demon magic. Several dozen spells poured out into the surrounding.

Kwahhhhhhhhhh!

The Book of Darkness’ strength was its overwhelming firepower. There were a great number of spells baked into the book, and she didn’t need to chant the spells to use them.

Once she took out the Book of Darkness, it was basically like having several dozen magicians as her support.

In a flash, Niberis' firepower exceeded Azell's firepower. Her spells pushed aside the lightning from the Sky Splitter as she created space for herself.

“Respond to my call! Oh, Book of Darkness!”

She used the Book of Darkness to create an opportunity for herself. He chained the spells together as she used a continuous stream of magic. She planned on stacking the spells in order to fight against Azell.

Pah-jeek!

Niberis' eyes widened.

‘What?!’

Her spells were broken. A high level spell had intruded from outside.

‘Laura?’

Naturally, she thought about Laura. However, Laura hadn't followed them up into the altitudes. However, she was here at the same time.

“They are a lesser version of her, but I basically have four Lauras with me. That should be enough magical support.”

Amongst Azell's clones, there were four silhouettes made out of light.

It was the Dragon weapon called Dawn's Defender. He had created clones with the help of Laura.

‘I heard it in our lore, but how many Dragon weapon can he summon all at once?’

Niberis was at a loss for words.

The Sky Splitter was an incredibly terrifying Dragon weapon in itself. However, Azell was using the Storm's Wing to fly at high speeds, and the Moon sword was eating at her magical energy.

Now he had manifested four clones of Laura using the Dawn's Defender.

“Let's talk.”

Azell continuously attacked her as he calmly spoke to her.

“As you've surmised, the Simpleton Prince is alive. He is alive and very healthy. He delivered his Dragon weapon to you, because he made an oath to become the resident of the Albatan forest. This was why he couldn't meet you.”

“Ooh-ook.....!”

“Your father wanted me to persuade you to leave the Plain of Darkness. I think his request is nonsense, but he made the request. I'm delivering his message to you.”

“Azell Karzark!”

Niberis raged. It felt as if her brain would fry from the humiliation she was feeling. However, Azell didn't care what emotions she was feeling. He was meticulous in hamstringing her spells. He continued to put her on the defensive as he spoke.

“Your father left the Plain of Darkness, because.....”

She couldn't shake off Azell's voice, and it shook Niberis' heart.

Chapter 197 - Message (4)

6

In the end, Azell was able to explain the entirety of Saibein's situation to Niberis before he exited the place.

Laura had been in a far away location, so she could harass their enemies. She had remained inside a barrier. Laura asked him a question.

“What if we.....”

“Mmm?”

“Wouldn't it have been better to kidnap her?”

“You've seen Niberis' personality. It wouldn't have been strange to see her kill herself if we did that.”

“However, we could' have completely subdued her. Couldn't we have just taken her straight to Sir Saibein?”

“...we were in debt to the Simpleton Prince, so we carried out the promise we made him. Still, I don't want to go that far in trying to fulfill that request. Moreover, our opponent isn't that easy.”

While Azell taunted Niberis, he thoroughly assessed her intentions.

However, this didn't mean Niberis was a foe that we could take lightly. In the process of pulling her up into the air, he could have killed her at any moment. However, once she regained her footing in the air, it had been hard for him to pierce through her defense.

The biggest problem had been the time limit.

“I believe Sir Almarick is here.”

Laura was using a mid level Magic Eye. She had been monitoring the waypoint in the far distance.

While he had been having a conversation with Niberis, Kieren

had exited the collapsed cave. Then Almarick revealed himself through the recovered waypoint of the Road of Darkness.

However, they were too late. Azell and Laura was already exited the location at full speed.

Azell let out a bitter laugh as he spoke.

“If we could defeat that bastard, we wouldn’t have to do this.....”

The tracking of the Dragon Demon general’s Dragon weapon was an ability possessed by Almarick. Aincera didn’t have that ability. Basically, Azell’s party would be freed from the pressure of moving endlessly if they killed Almarick.

However, it wasn’t time yet.

They had to get rid of as many waypoints to the Road of Darkness. At the very least, Azell had to create a scenario where he could fight Almarick or Reygus in a one on one fight. He had recovered the strength he possessed during his prime, but he couldn’t guarantee he could win in a battle against two of them.

‘The opportunity will come.’

Azell buried the humiliation he had suffered in his past battle, and he made a cool judgement.

Laura queried him.

“What are you going to do about Niberis?”

“I’m not sure.”

Azell told her the truth.

He told her how her mother had died, and he had told her what her father had suffered within the Plain of Darkness.....

At first, she had been incensed. However, her face started to turn pale as the story continued. At the end, she was frozen. She didn’t even think about catching Azell, who was making his exit.

It was all a lie. That was what she had thought. It was all bullshit

that was meant to deceive her.

However, there was something she could not deny. Azell knew too much details into her personal affairs. Laura used to be a high ranking officer in the Plain of Darkness, but there was no way she would have known about Niberis' personal affairs.

“If possible, I would like you to come to a sensible decision. She was someone I wanted to kill at all cost in the past, but.... I'm reluctant to do so now, because of Saibein.”

Azell let out a bitter laughter as he asked Laura a question.

“Which option do you prefer?”

“I'm of the same mind as you.”

Laura didn't like Niberis. From Laura's perspective, Niberis was someone that hadn't grown up doubting her own existence. She was someone that had been revered by everyone. Of course, Laura had become jealous of her.

However, such emotions became faint when she became Azell's comrade.

Laura already lost the source that had caused her to be jealous of Niberis. She wasn't a tool within Azell's party. She had comrades, who respected her. She was treated as someone with feelings.

“Maybe... I might be feeling sympathy towards Niberis.”

Laura wasn't sure of her emotions, yet she continued to speak.

In the past, Niberis and Laura didn't care about each other's personal life. The only thing that was important to them was the way they treated each other as competitors.

It was different now. She had learned the truth about Niberis through Saibein. Laura knew the truth now, and she could no longer look at Niberis with the same eyes.

Azell spoke.

“That might be true, but it is as you’ve said. She had been deceived and lied to by the specters of the past that refuses to die. She lived her life by being blinded by their fanaticism.”

In the past, Azell had considered Niberis only to be an enemy. However, his perception went through a change when he met Saibein.

He saw Niberis as a person now. She was a person that could cry, laugh and grieve.

It was an unwelcome change. It was best to only have hatred and hostility towards one’s enemies. Once one found a reason to be sympathetic towards an enemy, it was inevitable that the sword would be dulled.

Laura spoke.

“I no longer want to fight Niberis.”

“If I’m being truthful, I feel the same way. I suffered a big loss in trying to keep this promise. I just have to hope her choice won’t let this end on a sour note.”

Azell had suffered a lot of losses in this venture.

The fact that he could have eliminated a strong foe like Niberis was a big loss in itself. Even if he knew information that made him feel sympathy towards her, this might result in her killing one of his allies in the future.

Moreover, he had revealed the extent of his powers to her. He hadn’t shown her everything, but every information about his Dragon weapons would have already been transmitted through the Great Darkness.

Azell had shown good faith in keeping Saibein’s request. If Niberis chose to fight him despite all of this.....

‘At that point, it can’t be helped.’

While Azell's party took a break, the Guardian Shadows and the Dragon Demon king worshippers continued their fierce battle.

The damage to both sides was proliferating.

The role of attacking and defending was flipped, but it wasn't as if one side was overwhelmingly superior to the other. The Guardian Shadows were a bit ahead in terms of gathering information, so they were able to take the Dragon Demon King worshippers by surprise. However, one couldn't underestimate the fighting strength of the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

The members of the Guardian Shadows in each country were dying in ones and twos.

The spirits of the Guardian Shadow were no longer immortal, and their numbers were steadily decreasing.

"It is unfortunate that the continent was divided into seven kingdoms."

Kairen was commanding the Guardian Shadows from the Rulain Kingdom.

He was taking a break from fighting, but he still had to play his role. He gathered the information being sent to him from all over the place, and he was giving orders in real time.

Arrieta, who had been monitoring the situation from his side, let out a bitter laugh.

"It might have been better to have this war out in the open.... No, if that happened, I doubt we would be able to unite our forces."

If the Plain of Darkness declared their existence as they waged a war against the world again, would the world really fight back under one banner like the Dragon Demon war?

She didn't think so.

Aside from the kingdoms closest to the Plain of Darkness, the other kingdoms wouldn't consider it to be their problem.

The fear of the Dragon Demon war was etched in history, so there would be some sort of cooperation between the kingdoms. However, the loss of one kingdom meant the gain of another kingdom. She was sure each kingdom would try to maneuver, so they would benefit the most.

Kairen let out a sigh.

“This is frustrating. I am a noble of another kingdom. I hate the fact that I have to think about using someone in a similar situation as me. I am capitalizing on their deaths.”

Kairen was tied to the position of duke in the Rulain Kingdom. That fact made it difficult for him to reveal to the others that he was the commander of the Guardian Shadows.

A member of the Guardian Shadow had died moments ago.

After seeing how the enemies were being mobilized, he had ordered a retreat. However, this person hadn't listened. It was something that happened often in battle even if the command structure was crystal clear. The command structure hadn't been established in the Guardian Shadows, so it wasn't surprising to see this occur.

A noble from another kingdom had died, and he was troubled by it. Moreover, it was also a loss to the organization called the Guardian Shadow.

However, there was a more important factors that troubled him. The dead member was in the same position as Kairen in the past.

This person had become a member of the Guardian Shadow, because he had enmity towards the Dragon Demon King worshippers. This was the reason why he had fought with his life on the line.

Instead of feeling respect and sadness towards the dead member, Kairen felt revulsion towards himself.

“Someone has to do this task.”

“...it seems I’ve lived long enough, since I’m being consoled by you.”

Kairen let out a bitter laugh. He had only seen her as his young student, who he had to look out for. However, he realized that she was an adult in her own right.

Soon, he changed the topic of conversation.

“How’s your Dragon Soul coming along?”

“It keeps on staying at the precipice of succeeding and not succeeding.”

They had decided to move independently from Azell and Laura. This was why Kairen had decided to return to the Rulain Kingdom, and his party had joined up with Seigar. Moreover, he started teaching Arrieta and Seigar about the Dragon Soul in earnest.

Both of them were Dragon Majins, but they possessed as much Dragon Demon magic as Dragon Demons. This was especially true for Arrieta, who had gone through the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual. She had grown in leaps and bounds.

On top of that, she had learned the forgotten techniques. She possessed all the prerequisites needed to learn the Dragon Soul.

However, the Dragon Soul wasn’t that easy to awaken.

Kairen spoke.

“There is no other way than to be make steady progress. You’ve already learned the method, so you just have to work on it. It’ll awaken before you know it.”

“How long did it take for Leticia and you?”

“It took us about a month and a half. However, your environment is inferior to what he had.”

Kairen didn’t think he was better at teaching the Dragon Soul than Reshoo. Reshoo was the founder of the Dragon Soul, and he possessed deep understanding of this technique.

On top of that, Saibein's absence was the biggest factor. Reshoo had driven Kairen and Leticia to their limits, because Saibein possessed a healing ability. He couldn't do the same with Arrieta and Seigar.

Arrieta asked him a question.

"I see. So who awakened the Dragon Soul first between you and Leticia?"

"....."

At her words, Kairen visibly frowned. His expression was an answer in itself.

"She was ahead of you, teacher. She's amazing."

"That is....."

Unlike him, Leticia had known about her own nature. He was about to make an excuse, but he shut his mouth. He thought it would be unmanly of him to do so.

Kairen grumbled.

"You learned all the bad things from Azell, while you traveled with him. That is why you are being so mean."

"If it isn't now, when will I get to make fun of you? Hmmph. I should try hard to break your record. I can understand falling behind Leticia, but my pride as an elder sister would be hurt if I fall behind my brother"

On the other hand, Seigar's pride as a man would be hurt if he came in behind her. This was why he was trying very hard. The two siblings didn't look alike, but they were alike in every other way.

Arrieta spoke.

"However, it seems we won't be able to rest until Seigar and I awaken our Dragon Soul."

“That’s right. Our absence is putting a lot of stress on our side, so we’ll be moving in four days.”

In four days, it would exactly be two weeks since they decided to move independently from Azell and Laura. Everyone was well rested, and they were back to peak condition.

Currently, they had destroyed 40 waypoints. There were 182 left.

“The deciding battle will start when the number of waypoints falls below 100. We just have to hope that our forces will be able to hold out until that time comes.”

Kairen was planning on dispatching Reygus or Almarick at that point. He would set up a stage where they would be able to kill either of them for sure.

However, it was always true that no plan survives contacts with the enemy.

8

It had been 220 years since they had started the battle behind the scenes. This was the first time the Plain of Darkness had their hands full.

They knew the value of the Road of Emptiness. They knew it better than anyone. It was a relic left behind Atein, who they had deified. This added to the value of the relic, and they decided that they would have to protect it no matter the cost.

They could no longer leave the fight to the younger generation. The survivors of the Dragon Demon war had pulled the strings from the background. Now they would have to move their heavy butts.

Of course, if one thought logically about it, not much would change even if they did move into the field. It was the same as the elders of the Aunsaurus tribe. They were Dragon Demons, but they had all weakened from old age. It had been too long since they had abdicated their places from the front line.

However, those that were swept up by fanaticism usually made irrational decisions.

Reygus spoke.

<Hmm. I shouldn't be saying this, but what an ungainly sight. >

"I feel the same way. However, the extra forces will be useful."

Almarick smirked.

Laura and the younger generation were told that only 20 survivors of the Dragon Demon war were left within the Plain of Darkness. Everyone else was dead thanks to passage of time

However, that wasn't the truth.

There were some amongst survivors of the Dragon Demon war, who had voluntarily changed themselves into the Undead.

If one thought about it rationally, it was truly a foolish choice. Even if one became an Undead, one couldn't maintain one's sanity for long. Of course, if the Undead was made well, there were various methods that could be used to maintain the Undead. One could last for another several dozens of years, but this time period would be filled with pain.

However, these beings wanted to see the revival of the Dragon Demon king with their own eyes.

It was as Saibein had told Azell. It didn't take too long for the Plain of Darkness to be changed into a religiously fanatic organization. Those at the top were filled with madness, so it wasn't strange to see them act in such extreme manners.

When they changed themselves into the Undead, they had put themselves into a long hibernation in order to maintain their sanity.

However, the upper echelon of the Plain of Darkness had no choice, but to wake them up. This was how desperate their situation was.

Reygus shrugged his shoulders.

<How much help can they be? I guess the magicians might help, but those that wield swords need a lot of time to re-attune their senses.>

Spirit Order practitioners and the Dragon Arts practitioners lost a lot when they became Undead.

When they became Undead, they lost all reference points for their techniques. They had to re-tune their techniques to the standard of the Undead, and it wasn't a thing that could be solved in a short amount of time.

Almarick let out a bright smile as he asked a question.

“Are you speaking from experience after being drubbed by Azell?”

<...ughh. You are poking at a painful memory.>

When he became an Undead, Reygus had lost all his Dragon Demon magic. As a Dragon Arts practitioner, he had lost a lot of his skills in comparison to his past self. However, he had used battles to get used to the senses of an Undead.

Almarick spoke.

“Anyways, just the magicians will be of big help to us. These bastards have a lot of things hidden away, so it has been nice to continually use their resources. However, it seems the well is about to dry up, and I'm not too happy about it.”

For the most part, he had Aincera's support, so Almarick had been acting as the supreme commander within the Plain of Darkness. However, those that were in power respected him, but they refused to reveal all they possessed to Almarick.

<Mmm?>

Suddenly, Reygus raised his head. Almarick asked in puzzlement.

“What is it?”

<Someone is coming.>

“Is it someone that is worth paying attention to?”

“How could it not be?”

However, the one to answer Almarick wasn't Reygus. Almarick and Reygus became surprised.

<Who are you?>

Someone had entered into the room after tricking their senses. After being revived, this was something both of them had experienced for the first time.

The other person had his head covered with a black hood. No, if one was to be precise, a magical power was creating a curtain of darkness beneath the hood. It obscured the identity of the being, and it also modulated his voice.

“It seems a lot of time has passed.”

The being in front of them took off his hood as he spoke.

When his face was revealed to Reygus and Almarick, they felt more surprised than the surprise they had felt when their senses were deceived.

Chapter 198 - Return (1)

1

Yuren was having a dream.

It was a familiar situation. He was dreaming about the Guide. Countless fragments of memories were entangled in this chaotic space. Yuren was in a half-asleep state when the Guide whispered to Yuren.

-It seems you are unsatisfied about something.

‘You aren’t Carlos Rizester?’

Yuren brought up a question that he had harbored for a long time. The Guide gave an affirmation.

-That’s right.

‘Are you the being that I’ve speculated to be?’

-You know that I cannot answer that.

‘If you are the one I guessed, you would say that.’

-Even if I wasn’t, I would have said the same thing.

‘Unfortunately, that is true. When I say one thing, you evade in a different direction. I really do hate you.’

Yuren grumbled. He could only guess at the identity of the Guide. However, he didn’t have any information that could confirm his suspicions.

Yuren was greatly disappointed when he found out that the Guide wasn’t Carlos.

He had wanted the Guide to be Carlos. He wanted confirmation that he was the reincarnation of Baion, and he wanted the Guide to be someone that had fought besides Azell.

Suddenly, the Guide asked him a question.

-Yuren, what do you think about the life you are leading right now?

‘I believe I am using my life for a worthy cause.’

Yuren truly felt that way.

Until he met the Guide, Yuren hadn't thought for himself. He didn't have feelings, and he didn't know what he liked. He had been developed as a tool for the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

After meeting the Guide, Yuren started to find out what he disliked.

He didn't like the environment he was subjected to, and he didn't like being made into a disposable soldier to be used by the Dragon Demon king worshippers. On top of it all, he hated himself for not being able to escape from their clutches.

Currently, he thought he could like himself a little bit now. It was a gradual process. He couldn't shed the sense of guilt, but as he did the right things, he was starting to feel better about himself.

‘It is all thanks to you.’

He was able to escape from the yoke of his fate, because the Guide had given him power. He had been grown to be a tool for mad men, yet he was able to use his life as he fit now.

Above all else, he was able to meet his comrades.

Azell, Kairen, Leticia, Laura....and even Arrieta now.

He had established trust with everyone. He was no longer seen as a tool that didn't have a sense of self. He wasn't seen as a disposable tool. He gained comrades that would risk their lives for him and vice versa.

It was a bit embarrassing to say this out loud, but Yuren was truly touched by their attitude towards him.

He would do anything for these people. He would willingly give up his life for them.

These were emotions that he hadn't known it existed until he met them. Moreover, these emotions made him what he was right now.

-Isn't that enough?

'I'm scared.'

Yuren spoke.

'Your identity and my identity...,... I'm afraid the truth differs from what I want to believe.'

Until now, Yuren hadn't revealed his insecurities.

Yuren had always maintained an easygoing attitude in front of his comrades. He acted as if he didn't have any suspicions about the Guide, who was an unknown entity. It looked as if he was willingly following down the road of destiny being shown by the Guide.

However, in truth, Yuren was worried.

He was able to understand his past sins through the Guide. The knowledge ripped Yuren's heart into pieces. He always looked for an opportunity to escape as he pretended to live as a tool for the Plain of Darkness. His sense of guilt had kept mounting during this time. It was so large that he had wondered if he would be able to settle it in the future.

The meeting with Azell was like finding a light within the dark. He was able to decide how he wanted to use his life thanks to Azell.

He wasn't just blindly fighting against the acts being perpetrated by the Plain of Darkness. He was fighting to end them once and for all.

It was the same for Leticia. Yuren and Leticia had been continuously fighting a battle with no end in sight. The two of them joined hands, because they had felt the same desolate feeling about the future.

‘I’m afraid that you and I might become their enemy.’

This was the identity of the fear festering within Yuren’s heart.

Azell and his comrades were invaluable to him. He wouldn’t trade them for anything. This was why he was gripped with fear at the thought of harming them in some way. He was going nuts over it.

‘No matter who you are, I’m really thankful towards you. My feelings about that won’t change.’

Yuren knew the Guide had planned out his fate. In fact, he might merely be a puppet moving to the Guide’s tune.

At the same time, the Guide had given him the freedom to choose his destiny. In the past, he had only one choice. The guide had increased his options to two, and he couldn’t express how thankful he was.

‘If you are our enemy, then I.....’

-It doesn’t matter who I am. You are you, Yuren.

The Guide cut off Yuren’s words.

‘If my guess is right, I am your reincarnation. We are the same person.’

-Let us say your guess is right. You are the reincarnation of Baion. Do you feel as if you are Baion?

‘.....’

He didn’t feel that way. Yuren was sure he was the reincarnation of Baion, but he never considered Baion’s life to be his own.

-You are Yuren Rizester. It doesn’t matter what you think about me. You cannot deny that fact.

‘Even at the cost of going against your will?’

-I never forced you to do anything. You made your own choices.

After Azell and Laura separated from their comrades, they had delivered Saibein's story to Niberis. Afterwards, it wasn't as if they spent the remaining time doing nothing.

"Azell, I think the relic collapsed during the excavation, so they gave up on it."

"I see. Hmmm. It would be great if there was something left over....."

Azell and Laura was deep within a forest. It was a place where very few people frequented. They found an old ruin. There was evidence of someone else having tried to excavate this ruin.

However, it was as Laura had said. The excavation attempt hadn't been successful. Instead of a large-scale excavation, a small group had tried to empty the contents of the relic like tomb raiders. The tunnel had collapsed in the middle.

This ruin was made by Carlos during his lifetime.

Before Carlos was trapped within the mountain peak of Laus, he had made arrangements for Azell. They were placed all over the continent. In the past, Azell had recovered some of them through the information given to him by Yuren.

After Belrun died, Carlos had told Azell many things before the power of the Dawn's Defender was depleted. Azell received something he should have gotten when he had woken up inside the ruin. Carlos gave Azell a map with the locations of stashes he left behind for Azell.

While Azell and Laura was taking a break, they went around searching for these stashes.

Some had been excavated, and some had remained intact. In the past two weeks, Azell and Laura had visited seven ruins, and three had already been excavated.

"How much love did Carlos have for you?"

Laura was baffled as she looked at what they found within the collapsed ruin.

The ruin held the red magic cape, which he had worn during the Dragon Demon war. It was a cape made out of a Dragon's hide.

For reference, the two ruins before this one had held the true White Dragon armor. The one that he had gained through Yuren had been a replica, and it had been destroyed in the battle against Reygus. It was a truly welcoming sight to see this item.

"I guess a lot. That rascal should have left some of the Dragon weapons for his descendants....."

Azell couldn't help but laugh.

Carlos had been very persistent in creating these stashes. Aside from the weapons used by Azell, there were truly a lot of items hidden all over the continent.

Even if he believed that Azell would return someday, wasn't this a little bit excessive?

Carlos really wanted Azell to have his items again, and he had truly hated the idea of giving these items to someone else. He didn't liked it even if the people, who received it, would have been descendants of either Azell or Carlos.

'Even in death, he makes it hard for me to raise my head....'

Azell had let Carlos depart this world using his own hands.

The things that Carlos had arranged were helping him even at this moment. It spoke to a dedication and stubbornness that had transcended these long years. He felt a complicated emotion regarding the subject.

Suddenly, Laura spoke.

"You look the same."

"Are you comparing me to how I looked during the Dragon Demon war?"

Laura nodded her head.

Azell spoke.

“It does bring back old memories.”

“If.....”

Suddenly, Laura spoke.

“If the king is revived.....”

“That is already a certainty. It is a matter of when.”

Azell had accepted the fact that Atein’s revival as something that was going to happen. He had to think of it that way, and he had to prepare against it.

“What if the king moves in the manner described by Reshoo?”

“He’ll turn his back on those within the Plain of Darkness? He’ll have no plans on fighting the world, and he’ll try to bring his ideal to fruition in this world? Are you asking what I would do if he moves with good intentions?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll just send him back to his grave again.”

At his unhesitating answer, Laura was taken aback. When he saw her expression, Azell continued to speak.

“The bastard has the power to change the world His moves are so large in scale that it defies imagination..”

Atein was capable of changing the course of history. Azell knew this better than anyone in this era. He was a human that had experienced this truth. He had felt it in his bones.

“The Dragon Slayer’s Ritual..... Yes, it something that is in the realm of the gods. It wasn't such a bad idea. From the perspective of humans, it was a boon for them. Actually, it make me want to pity the Dragons.”

Atein had created the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, and he had reset

the relationship between humans and Dragons. If he hadn't done so, the population of the world might be much smaller right now. They also wouldn't have had the power to resist against the Dragon Demon general and Atein during the Dragon Demon war. Humanity would have been on their knees without the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

“On the other hand, the Dragon Demon war is a different story. He wanted to change the world to his ideal, so he turned the world inside out. Countless lives were lost before he realized , ‘Ah, I was wrong.’ I’m not going to give him the opportunity to repeat such a massive mistake.”

After meeting Reshoo, he had thought about this problem, and this was the answer he came up with.

“Atein possesses massive abilities. He can overturn this world, and he is a lunatic. What if he tries to strong arm the world into becoming like his personal ideal again..... Wouldn't a tragedy like the Dragon Demon war happen once again?”

“You are going to kill him just because of the possibility of another war?”

“It isn't just because of the possibility. I don't plan on forgiving that bastard even if he repents. Moreover, I don't plan on believing in the good intentions of a mad man.”

“.....”

Laura closed her mouth.

Azell asked her a question.

“It looks as if you want to say something.”

“I... I'm not sure.”

Laura furrowed her brows.

According to the Ausaurus tribe, she was taught that Azell was ‘the person that allowed the king to rewind his fate.’ According to

Saibein's words, this was the truth.

Atein started the Dragon Demon war, because he wanted to construct an ideal nation. He wanted to create a better world, so he forced the world to follow his new world order. This resulted in him taking on the role of a conqueror and an invader.

However, at some point in time, Atein realized that his ideals were merely an illusion that couldn't be achieved.

Atein had been very naive in wanting more from humanity and the Dragon Demons. This was why he had despaired after he had thrown the world into chaos through the Dragon Demon war. He had realized his mistake.

However, it was too late to recognize his mistake, and he was no longer able to stop what he had started. Atein despaired, but he also tried to take responsibility. In the end, he was killed by Azell. Azell was a sword forged through the events Atein had precipitated when he tried to force his ideals on the world. By falling to Azell, Atein had earned the opportunity to turn back his wrong choice.

Azell spoke.

"If that is true, I hate him even more."

"Why is that?"

"He made a horrible mistake that embroiled the whole world. Countless people had died as a consequence. He only threw away his own life, because he knew that he would be able to start a new life. That fact makes it more unforgivable."

Azell was firm in his stance. He didn't care what Atein had to say after his revival. His resolve wouldn't be shaken.

"The relationship between me and that bastard is already set in stone. There is no turning back for us. In fact, the events that occurred during my sleep makes me more secure in my position."

This point had been agreed by Azell and Carlos. They had come

to the same conclusion in their last conversation.

“The acts perpetrated by the Plain of Darkness... The remnants of his people transforming into a religiously fanatic organization after the Dragon Demon war... Atein has nothing to do with that? Ha! Bullshit. Laura, you have a habit of differentiating between the people of this era, and the beings that existed in the past. However, that isn’t reasonable.”

“Why?”

It was true. Laura tended to think that way. She was incensed by the actions perpetrated by the Plain of Darkness, but she didn’t show any signs of hostility towards Almarick. He had been disguised as an elder, who had consoled her.

Azell spoke.

“If Atein hadn’t made preparations for his own revival, the Plain of Darkness wouldn’t have been able to cause trouble to this extent. Moreover, Carlos wouldn’t have had to go through the hellish period of time where he had to wait for me.”

If Atein had died a normal death, Azell would probably have a different opinion. However, Atein had prepared the Great Darkness and the Road of Darkness for his eventual revival. The rights to the Dragon Demon weapons of the Dragon Demon generals and all other artifacts were given to the Plain of Darkness.

It resulted in loss of knowledge like the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, and a plague called the Great Darkness. It was the worst catastrophe of this era.

“Atein had made arrangements for his revival, and he allowed the survivors of his followers access to his artifacts. He has to take responsibility for everything that resulted from that point on.”

Chapter 199 - Return (2)

3

After the break ended, the party reunited within the southern border of Rulain.

From the perspective of the Plain of Darkness, it was reasonable to assume that Azell's party were moving to take out the waypoints near this region.

However, there were previous cases where Laura attacked a region on her own, and she had caused confusion as to where they would attack. They had to be more vigilant, so the Plain of Darkness gathered as many troops to the nearby waypoints.

However, Azell's party had a totally different aim.

"Currently, there are 180 waypoints of the Road of Darkness left."

Kairen updated his party on the current situation. While the party was reuniting, the members of the Guardian Shadows had destroyed two additional waypoints.

Azell spoke.

"We still have a long way to go."

"It would be great if we had overwhelming number of troops, so we can hit each waypoint at the same time."

"If we had such detailed information in the Dragon Demon war, the complexion of the war would have changed."

Azell let out a bitter laughter.

However, when he thought about it, the waypoints didn't have as much value during that time period. The Road of Emptiness was the lifeline of their current enemies, because they decided to reside at the end of the world. The place was called the Plain of Darkness. It was important, because it allowed the Plain of Darkness to carry

out their activities around the continent as a secret organization. If they were fighting the whole world, the road would still be a treasure, but it wouldn't be a critical loss if it was destroyed.

Kairen spoke.

“Anyways, as of today, one more location will be destroyed for sure.”

Even if their goal was in a different location, this didn't mean they wouldn't use this situation to their advantage. While the enemies were concentrated in the nearby waypoints, Count Beorein Michael and the elite forces led by Dragon Demon Prince Seigar would hit a completely different location.

Azell asked Arrieta a question.

“Princess, how's your Dragon Soul coming along?”

“I'm not there yet. It feels as if I'm at the cusp. I heard from teacher and Leticia that they had that feeling before they awakened their Dragon Soul. In truth, I'm frustrated. It feels as if I'm of no help right now.....”

Arrieta became despondent after rejoining the party.

It was to be expected. As the Dragon Demon princess, her martial abilities had been peerless. This was why she had been in charge of leading others. However, every one of her party members possessed terrifying abilities. So much so that she worried that she was being a burden to them.

Azell spoke.

“You have been of great help to us already. From our perspective, you are a truly a valuable addition to our party.”

“Hmm. Your words does soothe my feelings, but if I look at it coldly, I know that I won't be of much help if I don't awaken my Dragon Soul. It might have been better if I was a magician.”

She had such thoughts when she looked at Yuren.

It was true that Yuren was much inferior in terms of magical energy compared to his comrades. He had the hidden card where he could summon and fuse with a Demon, but this method carried a significant risk.

Still, as a high rank magician, Yure's abilities couldn't be compared to a Dragon Arts practitioner with similar magical energy. He was able to fight and support at the same time. This aspect of his abilities had wide utilization.

Azell spoke.

"It probably won't take you too much longer to awaken the Dragon Soul. Even when you learned from me, you were an exceptional student."

"I'm feeling better. Were you popular with women, because you possess a smooth tongue?"

"It wasn't really....."

"I heard about how you were like during the Dragon Demon war. I never expected you to have so many descendants. It was truly surprising."

"....."

Azell's smiling face froze in place. He discreetly glared at Kairen. Kairen had a devilish smile on his face.

"My teacher cautioned me about giving my heart to you. He put his heart and soul into making this entreaty. He argued the point by telling me the number of women you brought to tears....."

"Duke....."

"I'm just telling her the truth. I respect the legendary hero Azell Karzark, but you are a lecher that made countless women cry. I want to prevent the possibility of my precious student's heart getting hurt. I want to stop the possibility at the root. Moreover, Arrieta became part of our party, so I believed she had the right to

hear the truths about the Guardian Shadow.”

“Kooh-ook.....”

When Kairen replied in a cheeky manner, Azell started to shake. The problem was the fact that he knew he couldn’t say anything even if he had ten mouths.

Arrieta broke out into laughter.

“You don’t have to be too worried, Sir Azell. I don’t see you as a fast living playboy that throws caution to the winds.”

“...your words are quite comforting.”

Azell grumbled to himself.

4

The goal of Azell’s party was to destroy the pillar of the Great Darkness.

Currently, they had destroyed three pillars.

Before the Nadick empire fell, Carlos had defeated transcendent Dragon Demon Iksseru. She was the first to create the Dragon Demon weapon, and she was the first pillar to fall.

The King of Death Belrun had been sealed by Carlos, but when Azell killed him, the second pillar was destroyed.

Moreover, Azell and Laura had killed a being called the Metal King. He possessed the ability to changed anything into metal, and he believed that he could achieve eternal life through this ability.

“There are nine pillars left.”

According to what Carlos had found out, the Great Darkness had 12 seals that acted as pillars.

However, this didn’t mean Carlos knew all their location and true nature. He had been sure about five locations.

“We have four targets we have to destroy.... However, only three are realistic targets for us.”

One of the four target was located in the bitter cold region in the north. Basically, it was located within the Plain of Darkness. At this point in time, it was a location they couldn't assault.

“Even without that one, the Great Darkness won't come out unscathed when we destroy half of the 12 pillars.”

Even if half of the pillars were lost, the Great Darkness wouldn't collapse. It was too massive and old for the magic system to fail.

However, it was possible to weaken its functionality. The proof was seen when Belrun died. The Guardian Shadows were no longer beings with eternal life.

Kairen spoke.

“If I let my emotions dictate my actions, I want to immediately go to the Plain of Darkness. I want to destroy them right now.”

“I understand your sentiments.... Please quell your anger.”

Azell tried to soothe him.

The pillar within the Plain of Darkness had a deep connection with Kairen.

God of Pestilence Limas.

The Dragon Demon King worshippers used this god's artifact to bring about the plague called the Great Darkness. Kairen grinded his teeth when it came to this being.

Suddenly, Arrieta spoke.

“I can't believe it's this place again.... It seems we have a close relationship with this land.”

“I guess so.”

Azell agreed with her.

The party was standing within the Balran forest, which was located in the western region of the Rulain Kingdom.

It was a vast demonic land where humans dared not tread. It was

the perfect place for a pillar of the Great Darkness to exist. It made sense for it to exist in this place, but Azell and Arrieta truly had mixed feelings from their perspective.

Everything had started here when Azell woke up from his sleep, which spanned for 220 years.

He met Giles then Arrieta..... They had fought Dragon Demon king worshippers, and their deeds were worthy of being made into stories.

As time passed, Arrieta returned to this location for the second time, and she had stopped the 2nd Great Alliance of Darkness. Moreover, she went through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual for the first time in her life.

Still, both of them never expected to fight on this land again with their lives on the line.

Azell was the last to speak.

“Our last opponent, the Steel King, wasn't that terrifying. However, one cannot look down upon the defensive measures prepared by Atein.”

The members of his party nodded their heads. This was especially true for Laura, since she had felt the fear of Atein's defensive measure to her bones. She was clearly tense.

According to the information given to them by Carlos, the being sealed in this place was called the god of trees.

This being was able to accelerate the growth of trees by several thousandfold. He had tried to cover the whole world with trees that could move like animals. He was defeated by Atein and his comrades, and he had been sealed in this location.

It might also be the reason why the vast Balran forest had formed here.

Suddenly, Azell stopped walking.

“Is it here?”

They had no trouble reaching the location of the seal.

The Balran forest was called the Demonic land, but Azell’s party was too powerful. They also used the Magic Eye to scout their surrounding, so they were able to avoid most fights. When a clash with monsters and demonic animals were inevitable, they dispatched them swiftly.

If the Western Border guard knew about this, they would have fainted. Azell’s party were deep with the forest. Even those that were called experts of the Balran forest never came in this far.

Laura nodded her head.

“Here.”

At a glance, it was a wide open space with nothing there. However, she was sure this was the place.

Within the magic tome given to her by Carlos, the method to find this Pillar of Darkness was written there. Laura had used this method to find this specific location.

Azell spoke.

“I’m stumped. I don’t think I can use the method where I overturn the earth.”

“Our options are quite limited.”

“I guess we have no choice.....”

Azell took one deep breath, and he started circulate his Dragon Demon magic.

Ooooooooooooooooooh.....!

A frightening wave of Dragon Demon magic was emitted from him, and their surrounding started to shake. Azell’s party stopped breathing.

“Whenever I see it.... It is unbelievable.”

Kairen mumbled his words.

In the past, he had never fallen behind others in terms of Dragon Demon magic. After he awakened his Dragon Soul, his power had been amplified significantly.

However, the amount of power being emitted by Azell was oppressive.

Could this really be power that a human possesses?

Azell’s party wasn’t the only one that reacted to Azell’s display of power. The entire region went nuts.

The surprised birds flew into the air, and the beasts ran away. This was what Azell had been aiming for. He wanted to chase away any living beings before the fight started.

“Well..... I want everyone to take a step back.”

He had finished Dual Banding his eight Rings of Life, and they were resonating. The magical energy generated from the rings were extremely close in nature as Dragon Demon magic. The magical energy filled his Energy Pulse, then it overflowed to wash over the surrounding.

In the middle of the sky, the Sky Splitter was streaking through the air in its light form.

The sky started splitting, and enormous branches of light stretched out into the sky. It was such an enormous phenomena that the Western Border guard, who were far away, could see it.

Still, he was able to complete his Sun Lightsaber without any impediment.

He didn’t plan on steadily going towards the heart of the seal. He had done so last time, and he had experience an epic failure when he triggered the defensive measures left behind by Atein.

This time he’ll blow it all away.

He'll pierce to the center before the magic devices protecting the seal could activate.

If one considered the target was deep within the ground, it was an illogical idea. However, it was possible if Laura's power was used in conjunction.

Laura was concentrating as she held the Vitan's Chalice. She spoke.

"I found it."

She found the seal, which existed deep within the ground.

Azell was ready to shoot the Sun Lightsaber at any moment. He spoke.

"Can you open a path to it?"

"I'm sorry. I can only reach half way."

Azell wanted her to use the Path of Tears to open a direct path to the seal.

However, Laura determined that it was impossible to do this. The defensive magic left behind by Atein was too strong. It was even cutting off the Dimensional Distortion created by the Vitan's Chalice.

"I'll have to apologize one more time."

"...what happened?"

"The defensive magic is starting to awaken. When the Dimensional Distortion came in contact with it...."

"We attack immediately."

Azell was unconcerned.

It wasn't as if he hadn't thought about this possibility. Laura had attempted to use her magic to search and analyze the being below, and of course, he hadn't expected Atein's barrier magic to be unresponsive to such a probe.

“The defensive magic is 270 meters deep.”

It was so deep that it made one wonder how one was supposed to reach that place. Moreover, the seal was located deeper than the defensive magic.

Laura’s expression hardened as she spoke.

“I can no longer locate the exact location of the seal.”

“It doesn’t matter. We have to bring down its defense. That part is more dangerous.”

Laura nodded her head. As she retreated, the ground became distorted. She used the Dimensional Distortion to create a tunnel that led deep underground. Then....

The pure white light connected the sky to the ground as everything burned.

Chapter 200 - Return (3)

6

Three people were flying high in the sky. They were on a bird with long wings, and it was made of white flame.

“That is.....”

In the very far distance, the sky looked as if it was in tatters as it burned. It couldn't be explained as a natural phenomena. It was producing overwhelmingly more power than a storm.

“Hmm. This is the first time I've seen this phenomena. However, I have this odd feeling that I've seen it before....”

“Did you have a sense of deja vu? You speak as if you've seen this. It is weird.”

The voice next to him spoke up. The first voice voice answered the second voice.

“Maybe I've seen it before? I see. However, something unknown to me is happening within that. It is quite interesting. I want to go there quickly, and I want to see what is going on. ”

“This isn't the time to be so happy. By the look of things, we were a step too late.”

“It can't be helped. It's damage that we have to tolerate.”

“Aren't you being too relaxed right now?”

“It's just one of those things that we can't do anything about.”

“That point about you is still the same.”

“Hmmm. It's still the same? I should be happy about that. I'm not sure if I'll be the same after all of this....”

The first voice laughed. The laughter was buried by the flaps of the wings. The laughter was dispersed into the faraway blue sky.

7

Azell had manifested his Sky Splitter, and he had used the Sun Lightsaber. He caused a phenomenon called the Extreme Extinction.

Azell could be in his peak condition, yet the Extreme Extinction didn't occur every time he used the Sun Lightsaber. Several troublesome prerequisites had to be fulfilled for the manifestation of the Extreme Extinction. The Sun Lightsaber had to be focused at a specific location, and high pressure had to be created. These conditions were a must.

Azell clicked his tongue.

"I failed. Shit."

He hadn't failed in manifesting the Extreme Extinction. However, he did fail in destroying his target.

The problem was the fact that his target had been too deep below the surface. If his target had been in a mountain like Belrun, he would have blown up the entire mountain. He would have let the power of the Sun Lightsword radiate outwards to cause an enormous explosion....

However, he didn't know what was down there. If he caused an explosion in the deep underground, it could result in a calamitous result. If he was lucky, it would cause earthquakes in the nearby regions.

What would happen if he was unlucky?

The earthquake could hit the Southern Border guard pretty hard, and it could cause volcanic activities.

The consequences of detonating an explosion above ground differed from causing one underground. This was why Azell had concentrated his power to finish the Extreme Extinction. He had no choice.

The Sun Lightsaber's Extreme Extinction destroyed everything within its range. However, a problem arose from the fact that the

range wasn't that large.

It destroyed part of Atein's barrier magic, but the barrier magic had immediately reestablished itself.

Kairen spoke when he felt the enormous amount of magic energy swell from below the ground.

"Let's think positively. At least, we aren't on a fool's errand."

"It might have been better if there had been nothing here."

Leticia grumbled.

-Open Dragon Soul!

She didn't hesitate as she awakened her Dragon Soul. The image of a green Dragon appeared, and the nearby temperature started to drop precipitously.

When Kairen awakened his Dragon Soul, strong winds swirled around him. The two of them moved to the opposite ends of each other.

Arrieta spoke.

"I've heard the descriptions, but they are amazing. Still, I don't think we'll be able to end this fight quickly....."

The problem was the fact that Azell's party couldn't fight a long battle. They weren't equipped to do so.

If one extrapolated from the last incident, it seemed Almarick and Aincera didn't really know much about the pillars. However, it was also possible that they became aware of the pillars through the last incident.

Azell's party had to fight with the worst possible scenario in mind. They had to exit this place as soon as possible after destroying the sealed being.

Yuren, who had been focusing on his Detection magic, spoke.

"I've located the location of the seal. It isn't good, Azell."

“The seal was broken?”

“Correct. However, there is also a good news.”

“What is it?”

“It is as you’ve said. Part of the barrier magic have started attacking the being that was released from the seal.”

The defensive magic prepared by Atein was put in place to protect the seal. Of course, it would try to re-seal the being if the being broke free from the seal.

“That is good news. Let’s end the tree god before he become wise to this world.”

-Come Dragon weapon! Chain of the Earth Dragon!

Azell manifested his Dragon weapon. It was an enormous chain made out of some unknown black substance.

During the Dragon Demon war, this was only Dragon weapon that could go toe to toe with Reygus’ Soul Hammer. It was like the Earth Dragon, who were capable of controlling the earth. Azell gained the ability to freely move his chain.

Chwa-roo-roo-roohk!

It was as if the chain in Azell’s hand was dancing. It was three times as thick as a person’s finger, and it was several hundred meters long. It straightened out into the sky,

Then....

Koo-roo-roo-roong!

It arced in the air before it attacked a certain point in the ground. It shook as it dug into the earth.

The Chain of the Earth Dragon was like an Earth Dragon. It was capable of freely moving through the earth. It was capable of killing any monsters that were called out by the defensive magic, and at the same time, it could create a tunnel for its allies.

Soon, darkness poured out of the large hole in the ground.

It possessed an incredible amount of magical energy, and one could see monsters forming within it. These monsters looked familiar and unfamiliar at the same time.

Azell spoke.

“Well, let’s go.”

His words were like a starting bell. Azell’s party started fighting the unknown monsters.

8

All the immortal beings, who had lost to Atein, possessed abilities that transcended the logic of this world. They possessed extreme power. They all believed that their power was meant to change the world.

It was true that the world was a mess, so they wanted to change the world into something they considered to be right.

The Undead King wanted to change everyone into an Undead, so the world would no longer suffer from death and illness.

The Steel King wanted to changed everyone into living metal. No one would have to suffer from death or decline in health.

Then there was the tree god....

‘I have to bring peace to the world.’

The god of trees wanted a world without war. He wanted peace.

Was nature, which was unsullied by humans, peaceful?

It wasn’t.

All beings of nature fought desperately to live. Every being fought to live, and they tried to leave behind their progenies.

This was the case for animals and plants. Even small creatures like bugs followed the laws of nature. It was the survival of the fittest.

Would covering the whole world with trees bring peace?

At the very least, the god of the trees believed that.

There weren't that many existence in nature that possessed wisdom. Aside from humans and the Dragon Demon race, the number was extremely low. However, they were all the source of the disorder in this world.

When strong desire and wisdom mixed, irrational results occurred.

Humans were able to imagine and carry out irrational deeds. They were also able to have emotions.

They destroyed other species to build up their civilization, and they perverted the laws of magic. They even changed the laws of nature that had existed since the birth of the world. For example, the relationship between the humans and the Dragons had been changed.

Both the Dragons and humans had overwhelming greed, but they now possessed the wisdom and power to carry out their greed. This was why he was going to turn the beings of desire into trees. Trees loved peace and harmony. If he changed every being into trees, everything under the laws of nature would become peaceful.

‘Atein.....’

The tree god remembered the being that had defeated him.

The time he spent sealed was like a dream to him. He had become part of the Great Darkness, and the fragments of thoughts from other beings brushed by his consciousness.

It had been a very peaceful sleep.

It was a sleep where he had forgotten all about his desires, humiliation and anger. He hadn't even had the motivation to wake up.

This was why he had been asleep in this place for a very long

time.

When he realized this truth, his anger burned.

Goo-goo-goo-goo-goo!

The ground shook.

The trees on the surface responded to his will.

He could accelerate the growth of trees accelerated by several thousand folds.

The trees under his control could move faster and stronger than animals.

The god of trees ascended to the surface using the big hole that had been created.

It happened at that moment.

Ggwah-gwah-gwah-gwahng!

A sword made out of blue lightning pierced him.

In a flash, the sword left an ugly scar on the ground, and it flew back up into the sky. It was a devastating lightning attack.

His body was broken into pieces.

However, it was useless.

-Who are you?

The god of trees queried his attacker. A young human male with red hair was glaring at him. He held a blue sword that was surrounded by lightning.

“Shit. He is called the god of trees. It seems he is fine after having his body destroyed.”

The red haired young man mumbled to himself.

The tree god's body had been unbelievably easy to destroy. However, tree roots gathered from all directions, and they coalesced to form the tree god's body again.

He was a tree that had taken on the form of a human. His whole body was made out of wood, and there were many branches, leaves, grass and moss covering him. He was a strange sight to behold.

Yuren mumbled.

“It seems we were prudent in removing most of the trees here.”

“I’m glad our work wasn’t in vain.”

Leticia sounded tired as she spoke.

This location had been overgrown with trees. However, an earthquake and a storm had swept through this region. The destruction had reached a radius of several kilometers. It was a mess.

Azell’s party had done this. The party focused on destroying their surrounding as they fought the monsters summoned by Atein’s defensive magic.

The tree god possessed the ability to freely control trees. There were many trees nearby, so this location would allow him to maximize his power if they hadn’t done anything.

The tree god tilted his head in puzzlement.

-You aren’t Atein.

Instead of speech, the tree god spoke through mental waves. He looked at his surrounding as he spoke.

-Who the hell are you? Why are they running away?

Azell was about 50 meters away as he faced off against the god of trees.

His comrades had run away as soon as they saw the god of trees had regenerated from Azell’s attack. They were acting as if a monster was chomping at their heels.

Azell grumbled.

“If you had come out a little bit later, I would have ended you for good.... You are making this more complicated than it has to be.”

He had been fighting Atein’s defensive magic, so he hadn’t been able to prepare his Sun Lightsaber. However, they had used their fight to destroy the forest. They were successful in destroying most of the trees that could be used by the tree god.

The tree god spoke.

-You are quite smart. Are you related to Atein? You seem to know a lot about me.

Azell didn’t answer him. He didn’t plan on wasting his words on the tree god.

He had to destroy the tree god as soon as possible, and he had to exit this region. This was why he focused on his senses.

‘I see. It seems he does have a real body.’

The tree god had his body completely destroyed, yet he had regenerated himself through the roots of the trees.

This alerted Azell to something. He possessed an attack called Extreme Extermination, but he wouldn’t be able to destroy his enemy if he didn’t know where to direct his attack. If the tree god didn’t have a weak point, it would be an absolute disaster.

However, when Azell concentrated, he was able to find the nuclei of the tree god.

It was moving along the tree god’s blood vessels like blood. Very small marbles holding his power were circulating through his body at high speeds.

‘I can kill him.’

When his body was destroyed a moment ago, the tree god had moved the nuclei into various parts of his destroyed body. Then he called the leftover trees to reconstruct his body. When Azell became aware of this process, he became sure that he would be

able to kill the tree god.

-Come Dragon weapons! Unyielding Fortress! Earth Dragon's Chain! Master of Raging Waves!

He summoned his Dragon weapons in succession, and his body was divided into several dozen clones. He had used the Dance of the Shadows, and his clones were identical to him. Each of them possessed a presence. They all ran through the air.

The tree god tilted his head in puzzlement.

-What an interesting trick. A human is capable of doing such a feat?

Atein was capable of using Incarnation, and the tree god had fought against Atein. It seemed the tree god had been sealed for a very long time. It must have been a period in history when Atein hadn't been able to use Incarnation yet. Maybe, they had fought before the technique called Incarnation was created.

Koo-koo-koo-koo-koo!

The Earth Dragon's Chain swept over the region. A massive amount of soil surrounded the tree god, and it attacked like a tsunami.

-This is...child's pl.....aaaaa..yyyy.....?

The mental wave being emitted by the tree god was cut short.

The sight in front of the tree god's eyes became distorted, and he felt a terrifying amount of pressure shake him violently. It was as if his body and mind was being assaulted by a wave. It felt as if he was being tossed by the sea.

It was an attack from the Dragon weapon called the Master of Raging Waves. The 'current' created by the Dragon weapon was able to attack physically and it was capable of blowing away the flow of magical energy. It was capable of putting pressure on the spirit.

Azell shot above the soil. He pointed towards the sky as he spoke.

“I don’t know if you know this.”

It was truly a gesture full of meaning, so the tree god looked upwards.

His eyes widened.

A part of the sky was being distorted in a strange way. It was as if an enormous drop of water was floating in the air.

-What is that?

“By looking at your reaction, you know nothing. Your body will soon find out what it is.”

Azell snorted as his body dissolved into light. It had been his clone.

Then.....

Kwah-ahhhhhhhhhh!

The enormous dimensional distortion floating in the sky changed shape. The sunlight had been gathered from the heavens, and it became an attack that couldn’t be avoided. The attack poured down on the tree god.